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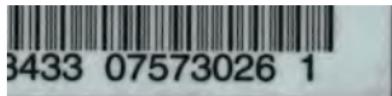
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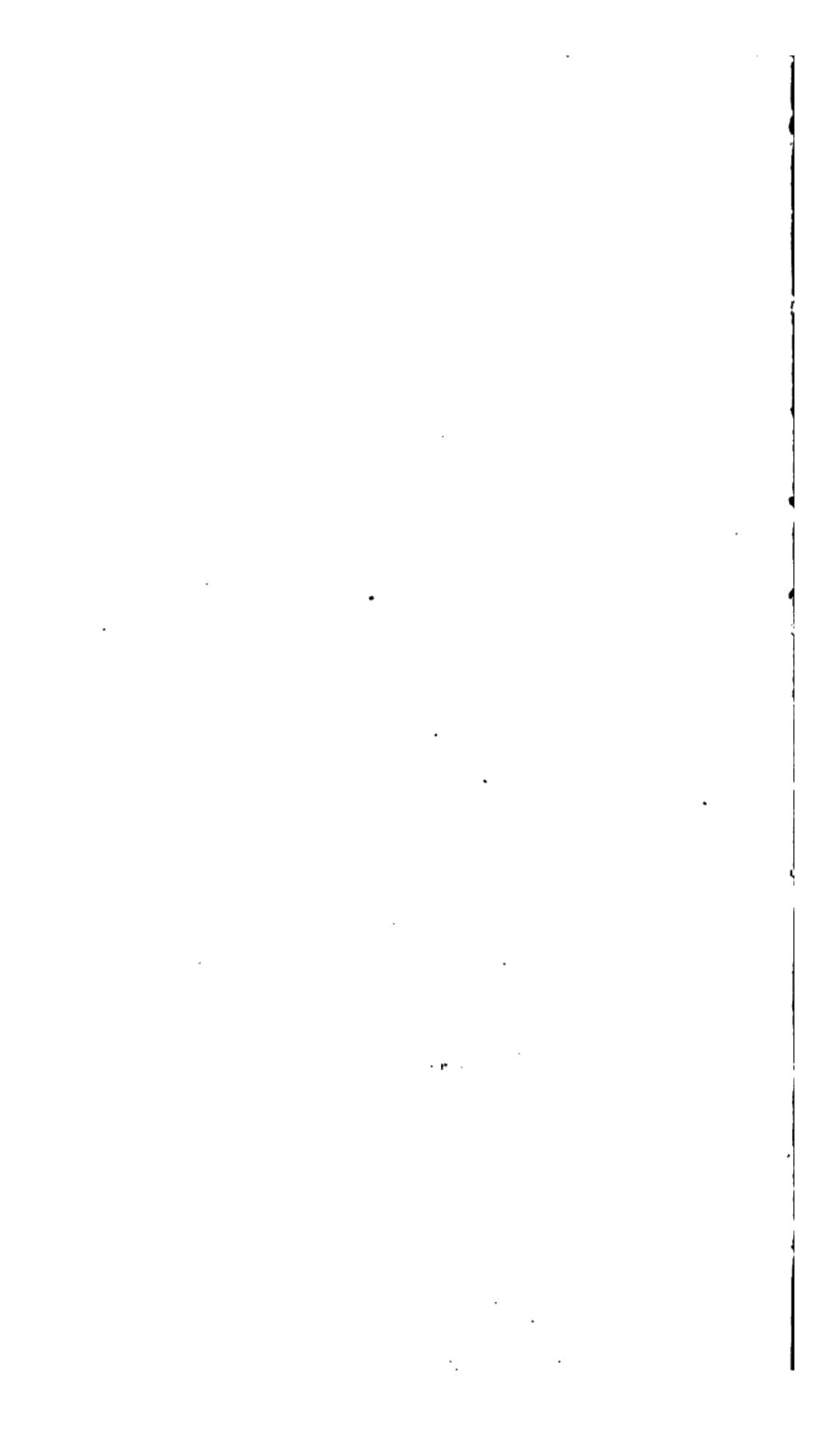
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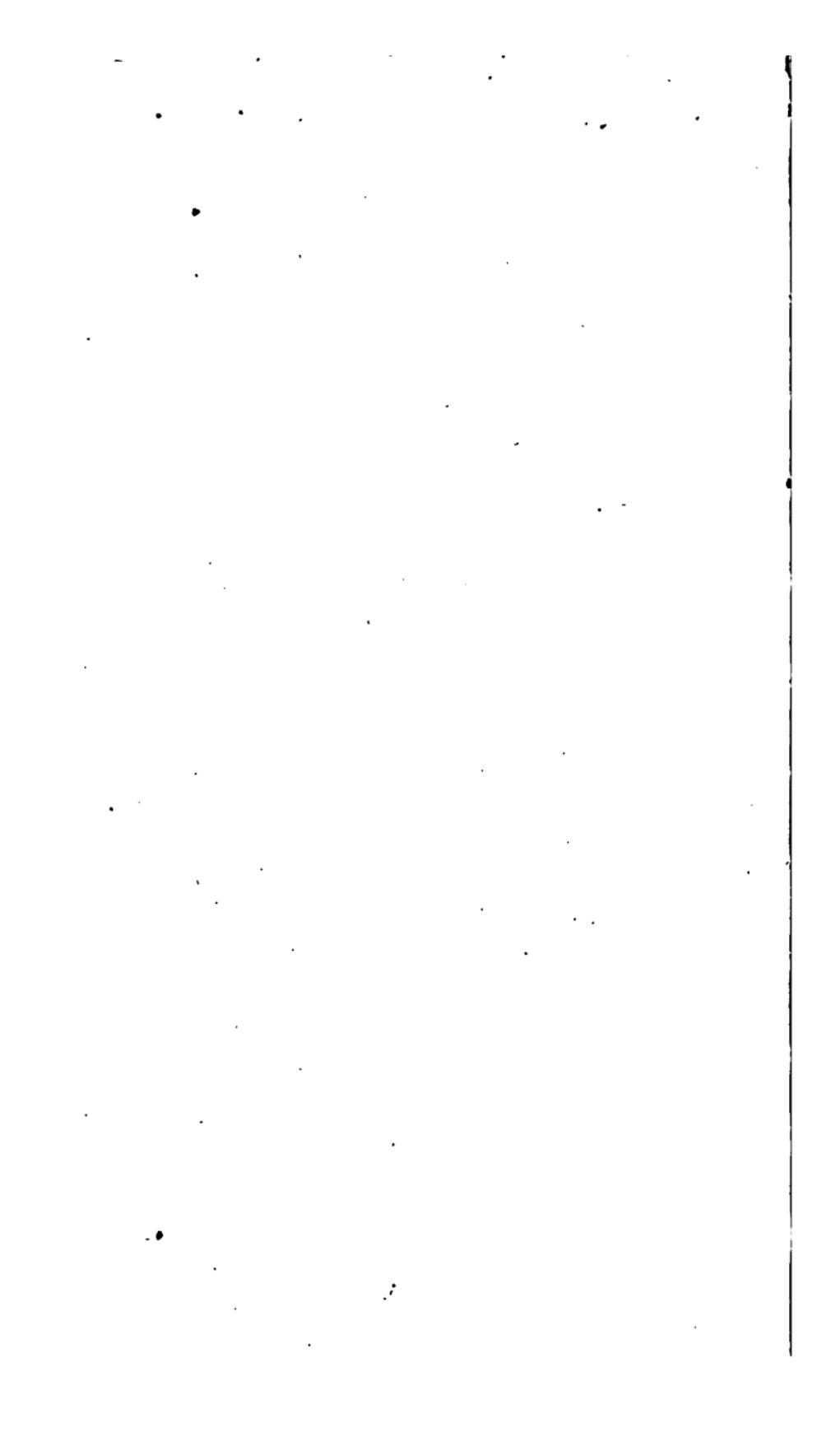
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EDITED

BY LEITCH RITCHIE.

SCHINDERHANNES,

THE ROBBER OF THE RHINE.

BY THE EDITOR.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY, LEA AND BLANCHARD.

1833.

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SCHINDERHANNES,

THE ROBBER OF THE RHINE.

BY

LEITCH RITCHIE,

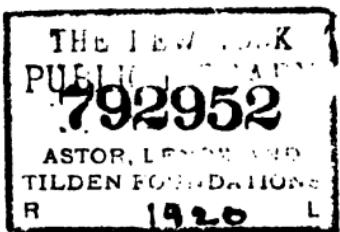
AUTHOR OF HEATH'S PICTURESQUE ANNUAL, ROMANCE OF
FRENCH HISTORY, TURNER'S ANNUAL TOUR, ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY, LEA AND BLANCHARD.

1833.

E.R.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE picture of manners exhibited in the following tale, is applicable only to a particular epoch and country, and may, therefore, be said to be historical. It was not thought necessary, however, to imitate the historian in accuracy. Although some readers may detect an attempt to illustrate the less disgusting features of the bandit system, as it existed in Holland, Belgium, and the other countries of the Rhine ; yet the author, in the main, was only anxious to produce an interesting romance. To show the nature of the materials on which his slight superstructure has been raised, a note is introduced at the end, containing a *bona fide* account of the banditti, extracted from another of his works.

It has been remarked somewhere, that “the critic-judge of the LIBRARY OF ROMANCE, by admitting ‘Schinderhannes’ into the series, had pronounced a favourable judgment on his own work.” This is true, although no doubt a little malicious. We all form a favourable judgment of our own work —every one of us ; and the only difference in our individual case is, that, instead of having to wait for a confirmation of our judgment from a bookseller, we are able to give the *imprimatur* ourselves.

Lest this mode of *Napoleonizing*, however, should give offence, or excite suspicion, we beg

leave to quote the following sentence from the preface to the first volume of the LIBRARY :—

“ With regard to the editor's own contributions, which of course, are not meant to be alluded to in the preceding (laudatory) remarks, all that can be said of them is, that if they are not fortunate enough to meet with the indulgence of the public, they shall be at once discontinued.”

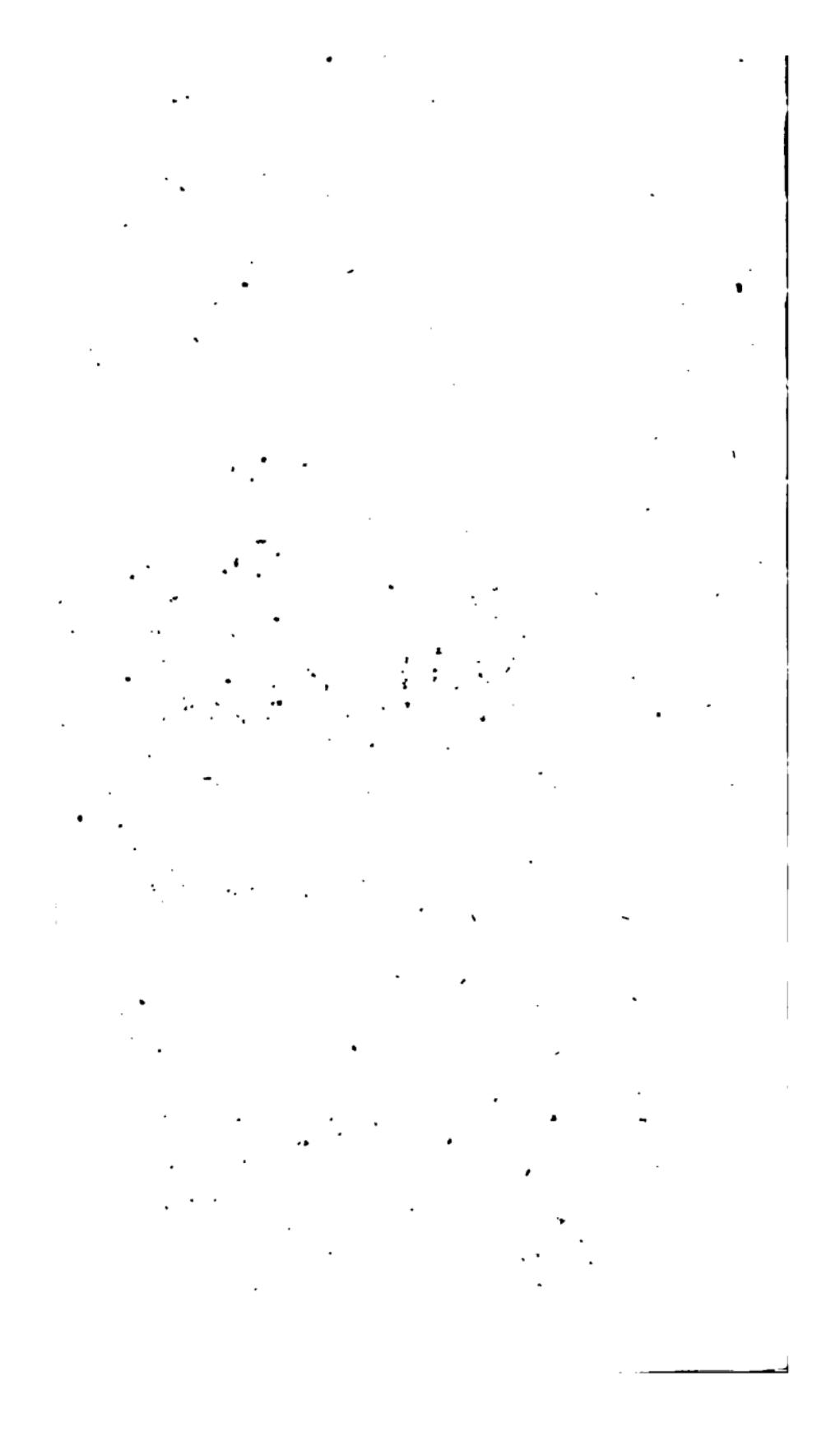
CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

CHAP. I.—A bad beginnng	11
II.—How Carl Benzel loses his mistress	21
III.—How the hero becomes a vagabond	31
IV.—The travels of Carl Benzel	45
V.—The exodus into the wilderness	52
VI.—The old adage of the frying-pan and the fire	74
VII.—The confession of the Black Penitent	92
VIII.—Prison hours	108
IX.—Showing how a Jew may act the part of a Christian	119

BOOK II.

CHAP. I.—The travels of Ida	139
II.—Showing how society makes rogues in order to hang them.	153
III.—The bandit queen	165
IV.—The laws of the outlaws	174
V.—The watch of the dead	187
VI.—The difference between thinking and acting	196
VII.—How to ruin the devil	204
VIII.—The passage of the Rhine	218
IX.—Showing how the story ends	233
Note.—The Robbers of the Rhine	239

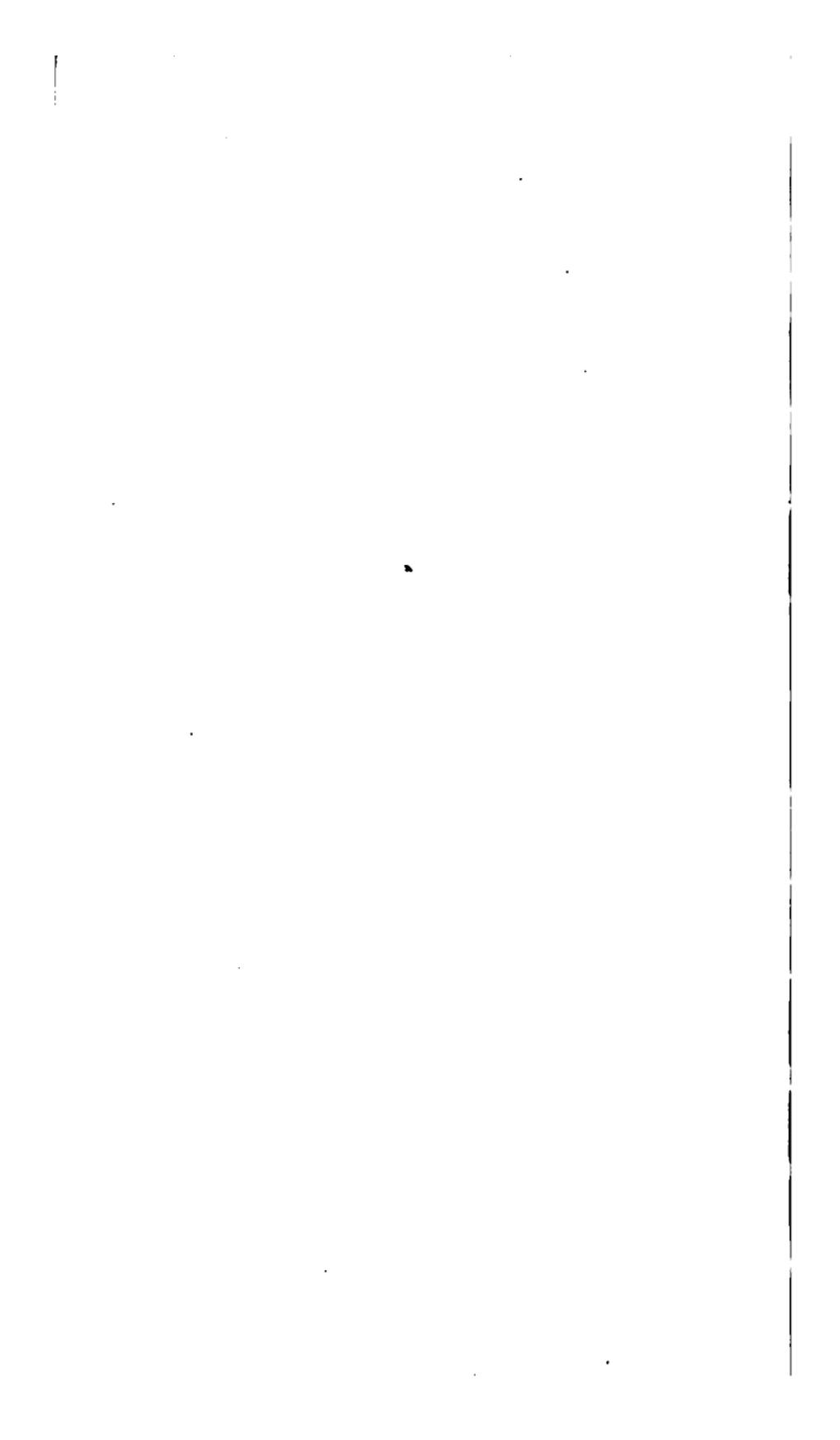


SCHINDERHANNES,

THE ROBBER OF THE RHINE.

BOOK I.

B



SCHINDERHANNES,

THE ROBBER OF THE RHINE.

CHAPTER I.

A BAD BEGINNING.

THE Imperial City, as the inhabitants still love to call it, of Aix-la-Chapelle, is situated in an amphitheatre, the sides of which are formed of gentle eminences scarcely deserving the name of hills. On the north, however, the Lousberg is sufficiently lofty to diminish the violence of the wind, which breaks upon its summit, and whirls in eddies round the town ; and on the south the ground rises, almost imperceptibly, till it mingles with the chain of hills which intersects the ancient forest of Ardennes, the Eifel, and the country of Montjoye.

The valley itself—or the arena of the amphitheatre—together with the sides of the eminences, is clothed with the richest vegetation ; while the hills beyond present, in some places, a rude and sterile aspect ; and in others are covered with hoary woods. Every variety of natural scenery is comprehended within the district ; nor is the city of Charlemagne, although an artificial object, out of keeping with the other parts of the picture. Looking down upon it from one of the high places we have mentioned, more especially at early dawn, or just after sunset, it is scarcely possible to remember the

lapse of a thousand years. All history is a blank from the time of the new Cæsar. That antique world is before you which his single genius subdued, and only failed to civilize because a hero lives no longer than a common man. You see in those towers before you, struggling through the mists of morning and evening twilight, a'palace which was one of the wonders of the time ; and your imagination shapes out of the moving shadows of the valley, a crowd of human forms, which it dignifies with the names of

“—Roland brave, and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer;”

who, with their master Charlemagne, gleaming like stars in the darkness of the age, preceded chivalry like a prediction.

Numerous little brooks are observed winding in the neighbourhood like lines of smoke ; and at a short distance from the bourg of Borcete, some of these unite in a body of water, about a hundred yards in length, over which hangs perpetually a mantle of vapour, more or less apparent according to the state of the atmosphere. This is the famous Hot Pool, and those the progeny of the mineral springs which first attracted the royal Frank to the spot, and which, at the time we write of, filled Aix-la-Chapelle with the wealthy and infirm, and their ravenous attendants the strong and the needy.

Before introducing to the notice of the reader such of the residents as we are more immediately interested in, it may be well to request him to bear in mind that the transactions herein recorded took place towards the close of the last century, when as yet the anarchy of the revolution had not subsided into a regular tyranny. The convulsions of France were not confined even to the wide territory bounded by the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrennees, and the sea ; they extended throughout all Europe ; the vast Atlantic felt the impulse from shore to shore, and the New World trembled with the throes of the old, as it laboured with the giant Liberty. The whole earth was shaken by the struggle, the shrieks, the agony, with which this god-like infant was brought into the world—still-born.

But in the countries more immediately subjected to the influence of France—in Belgium—on the borders of the Prussian states—along a considerable part of the course of the Rhine—the impulse communicated was scarcely different in character from the momentum. It was not merely a political agitation, influencing more or less the moral feelings, but a moral revolution, comprehending within its circle all the social relations together. The strangest doctrines were promulgated without exciting surprise ; all existing notions of right and wrong were either reversed or at least confused ; and man's opinions seemed to be broken into their first jarring elements, before order had been introduced into the chaos by the necessities of political society.

This confusion was worse confounded by the physical sufferings of the people for the last few years. The whole territory had been ravaged by the republican armies with fire and sword ; and, even after the occupation of Belgium by the French, in 1794, the war that could not be continued against the bayonets, was waged against the laws of the intruders. The peasant whose fields had been laid waste—the artisan whose trade had been ruined—the bankrupt debtor—the disbanded soldier—all hastened to repair their fortunes by preying upon that society from which they persuaded themselves they had been cast off. There mingled, however, in the delinquencies, even in the most desperate of those vagabonds, at least in the commencement of their career, some faint touches of martial honour. Like the free-booters towards the close of the Seven Years' War, their first exploits were at the cost of the enemy. They seized upon their forage, stole their cattle, and sometimes shed their blood ; but still, fighting only in dozens or scores, and murdering in miserable detail, they had not the credit of being reckoned soldiers ; and at length a sense of their hopeless degradation, uniting with the severity of the penal laws, reduced them forever from the rank of guerrillas to that of robbers.

This description—which ought to be made evident by the incidents of the narrative—may seem to be here

out of place ; but the reader, without bearing in mind the state of society, would hardly be persuaded to yield up his imagination to our control, when, in reference to countries so near our own, and dates that may be remembered by most of us, we proceed to detail occurrences such as have been considered peculiar to the older romance.

One evening, just before the sun had set, but when his level ray, interrupted by the eminences that skirt the valley, flung here and there a premature twilight, the scene sketched in the opening of the chapter was beheld, apparently with a mixture of pleasure and impatience, by a young man walking in an opposite direction from the town. He was in the bloom of early manhood, and not otherwise distinguished from persons in the rank of gentlemen than by the somewhat fantastic appendage of a guitar slung upon his shoulder. Standing still ever and anon, he watched with an admiring, and yet half discontented eye, the downward progress of the sun, and the deepening shadows that crept along the valley. He appeared unwilling to go beyond a certain verge till warranted by some expected appearance of the evening ; but his feet outstripped his resolution, and as he found himself near the summit of the eastern side of the amphitheatre, he suddenly threw himself down upon the grass, and lying at full length upon his back, gazed sullenly up into the sky.

He had not long lain, however, in this astronomical position, when his brow cleared, and his fine features were lighted up with enthusiasm. A twilight landscape, with its adjuncts of sky and water, and woods, and the dwellings of men, is always beautiful ; but a twilight sky uninterrupted by a single glimpse of earth, is a world of enchantment into which the most unquiet soul may flee away and be at rest. The young man was even painfully sensible of this fact, when, after some time, on turning down his eyes accidentally from the rose-coloured clouds that swam like islands of the blest above his head, he saw that the valley was completely covered with the shades of evening. The now invisible sun.

which still gilded the heavens, had withdrawn his light from the earth ; and our astronomer, recalled to the affairs of his terrestrial existence, sprang almost fiercely upon his feet, and in another minute stood upon the ridge of the eminence.

On the opposite side, half way down the declivity, there stood a splendid mansion, evidently the abode of some one illustrious by the nobility either of wealth or birth. This was evidently the destination of the young man, for he walked straight towards it ; although choosing, as if from caprice, a sunken path that looked like the bed of a rain-course. But on arriving within a short distance of the avenue, he suddenly turned away, and plunging into an ornamental wood, reached circuitously the garden wall, which he climbed as stealthily, and almost as dexterously, as a cat. After looking carefully round to see that the coast was clear, he dropped as noiselessly down on the inner side, and made towards one of the wings of the building, which seemed appropriated to the sleeping apartments.

Here he paused to listen. All was silent. The air was faint with perfume, and the dying daylight had hardly power enough to disclose the forms or colours of the flowers which thus exhaled their evening incense. He unslung his guitar, and struck the chords, first softly, and then with a bolder touch. There was no reply. In a few minutes his hand wandered, as if unconsciously, into tune, and his lips, accustomed to accompany the sounds, emitted, in a low rich murmur, the following words :

I.

'Tis now the hour when blushing Day,
Like youthful bride to rest is stealing,
But coy to go, and loth to stay,
One doubtful smile is yet revealing.
But go, sweet Day, I would not woo
Thy stay with one poor verse of mine—
Go, and thy veil of deepening hue
Will hide a brighter blush than thine.

II.

And hark ! the twilight minstrel now
Sings to the lonely star of even—
So falls the music, faint and slow,
To youthful fancy's dreaming given.

But hush, sweet bird ! I would not buy
Thy lay with one poor verse of mine—
Hush, lest thy murmured minstrelsy
Drown a far softer note than thine !

“ Hush, dearest Carl !” cried a voice so exquisitely feminine, that it almost seemed to warrant the compliment implied in the song. It proceeded from the casement above the minstrel’s head, but the speaker did not appear.

“ Ida !” said the youth, sinking upon his knee, “ arise, bright star, and let thy poet worship thee !” and he struck the guitar again with a bolder sweep, and was commencing one of those idolatrous strains in which it is the wont of lovers to adore their mistresses.

“ Oh hush, for heaven’s sake !” exclaimed the young lady, in a tone of unaffected terror and entreaty, as she bent out of the window. “ And in sooth I would have cried hush before you had concluded, could I have found the heart. My mother’s suspicions are now fairly awokened, and her prejudices—for I know they are but false, false, foolish prejudices—to all appearance confirmed. We can meet no more here—I fear, indeed, we can never meet again !”

“ Prejudices !”

“ Ay, prejudices—do you find the news strange that I have repeated every evening for a month ? My mother, in her ignorance of your real character, thinks you a spendthrift, a gamester, a dissipated, bold, bad man !”

“ But you said, love, that these prejudices had been apparently confirmed ?”

“ And by one whom I have heard you term your friend—the young, rich, handsome, and noble baron of Wolfenstein.”

Carl’s hand grasped, as if by an involuntary motion, the handle of a short sword, which he carried for defence beneath his frock, as he muttered half an oath, and gulped the other half down.

“ How was this ?” demanded he, in a voice broken with passion.

“ Not intentionally, but rather, as it seemed to me, through careless folly than design. When the reports

were mentioned he laughed at them, not as being false, but as being rather advantageous than otherwise to the character of a young man of spirit ; and when he saw the impression made upon my mother, he endeavoured to excuse you, but in so equivocal a manner that her suspicions were fully confirmed."

"Ida," said Carl, in great agitation, "this Wolfenstein loves you—he confided the secret to me before he knew that I loved you myself."

"And to me also," replied Ida ; "but not yet to my mother. Good heaven, spare me that, or I am lost!"

"And is it this man whose words can have weight with you on such a subject?"

"With *me*!" exclaimed Ida, bursting into tears ; "Oh, Carl Benzel, is it you who asks ? Have I not known you for more than a year, even as a sister knows her brother ? Have I not wandered with you, night after night, through these garden walks, at the very hour when my mother believed you to be breathing the poisonous atmosphere of a gaming-house ? Has a single thought of your soul been withheld from me ? Do I not know you—although rash and hot-tempered, and *too* brave—to be good, and true, and high-minded, and pure-hearted ? But what of that ? I heard you reviled without uttering a word ; and when my mother prophesied that your career was near its close, that your moderate fortune must touch upon exhaustion, and that in a little while you would find yourself an outcast and a beggar—I could but weep !"

"Heaven bless you !"

"And then the fruits of long months of mean concealment were lost ; my mother looked at me as if she would read my very soul, and I could but hide my face in my hands, and weep the more." Carl Benzel was silent for some moments. He stood, tall and still, in the shadow of the house, with his hat drawn over his brows, and his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Ida," said he at last, but without looking up, "with you I am all that you have described. When we love, the mind reflects unconsciously the image of her who governs its pulses; just as the calm ocean gives back the

radiant form of the moon. Alone—oh there it is!—when our good angel is absent—when evil thoughts crowd in like demons—when the shadow of the black wing of the Tempter falls chill and heavy upon the heart ——”

“Look up ; let me see your face.” Carl Benzel obeyed ; and she could perceive, in the imperfect light, that it was as pale as marble.

“Say on.”

“Ida,” said he, starting, “I fear you have accustom-ed yourself to think of me not as a brother but as a sis-ter. The sexes are different in soul as well as body, and what we term, at the worst, folly, you will look upon as crime. Can you bear to hear the truth ? When you know from my own lips that I *have* gamed, that I *have* plunged into dissipation, that I *have* impaired my estate, will you cast me off ? will you wed the baron of Wolfen-stein if your mother issues the command ?”

“You do but mock me.”

“O would to heaven I did ! But speak, what is your decision ? The avowal I have made is only premature by one night, for to-morrow it was to have been my busi-ness here.” Ida was weeping, but as much at the harshness, or rather hardness, of Carl’s manner as at the disclosure.

“Speak,” said he, more softly ; “but remember that you know what I *can* be when you are with me, and that I have talked of follies which the sun shall never look upon again.”

“Carl,” replied Ida, after a momentary struggle, “the thought was in my heart when I came here to-night, but till now I believed that I should never have had the courage to give it utterance. I will save you, however, even from yourself, since your words imply that it is in my power to do so. You have often implored me to fly with you from my home, my friends, my mother—I con-sent ! There, take me, I am yours !” and she leaned sud-denly out of the window, as if she would have thrown herself into his arms, while her tears rained bright and fast upon his face.

"My noble Ida," exclaimed the lover, with a burst of enthusiasm.

"Stay not for speech," she continued, "for I am only amazed that we have been so long uninterrupted. To-morrow I shall be a prisoner. To-night it must be done or never. My money and jewels are at hand; in another minute I shall spring into your arms!"

"Ida," cried Carl with a gasp, "I cannot permit this; take another day to prepare, and I shall be at your window at the accustomed hour."

"Now or never. To-morrow I shall be a prisoner."

"I will set you free!"

"A room is already preparing for me in the centre of the building."

"I shall reach it, were it in the centre of the earth!"

"I have offered," said Ida, beginning to tremble, "do you reject the gift?"

"To-morrow night —"

"To-night or never!" and her heart grew sick and faint.

"Listen—it is for your own sake—"

"Speak—in a word! To-morrow, and every other morrow, it is *impossible*. I accord you a minute for decision.—It is elapsed!"

"Hark!" The belfry clock struck.

"It is the twelfth hour!" and Ida shut the window. Carl retraced his steps to the town, his head reeling, and his heart burning with the torture of Tantalus. After threading some obscure streets, he at length reached a spacious mansion, which, although completely dark without, was brilliantly lighted up within. He paused in an ante-chamber, and looked with a sinking heart into the interior, which was full of company clustering eagerly round the table. There seemed to be a repulsive property in the very atmosphere which prevented him from entering; and as he thought of the "good angel" whose protection he had rejected, a feeling approaching to faintness came over him, and he leaned for support against the door-post.

"Thunder of heaven!" cried one of the gamesters, rushing past him; "it is of no use, I will play no more!"

What, Benzel, art thou asleep—or ruined?" The speaker was a young man, about Carl's own age, and possessing equal advantages of person. There was, however, in his manner, particularly when he laboured under any excitation, a dash of the vulgar ferocity affected to this moment by many of the youth of Germany; and at such times a foreigner could hardly have believed him to be a man accustomed to good society. His dress was half military half civilian; and instead of wearing his sword concealed like that of Carl, it hung ostentatiously from his girdle, in which was stuck a brace of handsomely mounted pistols.

"Wolfenstein," said Benzel sternly; "I have an account to settle with you."

"I pray heaven then," replied the baron, "that you are due me a balance, for I have not twenty dollars left to carry me to the Black Forest."

"Be satisfied, sir, that I shall pay you what I owe. Meet me at the Ketschenbourg as soon as it is light enough to see the point of your sword."

"You mean coffee, then?"

"Blood!"

"Indeed! Will not candle-light do as well, and a private room where we are?"

"Not at present. I am pledged to another game. In a single hour I shall either be a beggar or ——"

"The son-in-law elect of Madame Dallheimer."

"You are insolent."

"That is enough; I shall not fail you." The baron then left the house whistling a popular air, and Benzel, whose courage was restored by the prospect of physical danger, walked into the gaming-room.

CHAPTER II.

HOW CARL BENZEL LOSES HIS MISTRESS.

IT was nearly daylight when the baron of Wolfenstein was standing by the wall of the garden of Ketschenbourg, industriously employed in polishing the blade of his sword with his glove. His task, however, was very little advanced, when he saw running, or rather rushing, along the road, a figure resembling that of his adversary.

“ Qui vive ?” shouted the baron.

“ Are you ready ?” demanded Carl, without stopping.

“ Always !”—Their swords clashed before the word had completely left his lips ; and Wolfenstein fell upon his knee from the shock, while the weapon of his impetuous challenger, less by skill than fortune, sprang out of his hand to the distance of many yards.

“ Fool !” cried Carl, as the baron dropped the point of his sword, “ the game is yours ! Strike, if you would not have me report you ignorant of the laws of arms !”

“ Demand your life !”

“ Strike, I say ; strike speedily, and home !”

“ For what ? To revenge you on yourself ? Not I, by the Three Kings ! You may win your Ida, and wear her for me ; I am off to my own dominions, where there is one far kinder, and as fair. But how go the cards ? You have the look of a man who has just lost his last dollar.”

“ O that I could change places with such a man ! How cheerfully would I not dig the earth for a sustenance, or sell my blood for a consideration ! But there is no beggar so lost, so hopeless, so desperate as I. I have lost a treasure that all the gold of the east could

not restore. Last night Ida might have been mine ; but my honour was pledged ; my property was staked, to the last coin, and the last foot of land ; and my resolution was taken to escape from the torturing suspense in which I have lived so long, and to live to-day a free man either in ruin or success."

"It was nothing less than wise ; but why quarrel with the accomplishment of your own desires ?"

"She offered, she herself—think of that ! to elope with me last night ; and I rejected the offer, without being able, under the cursed circumstances, to utter a word in explanation."

"Truly, a pleasant predicament ! But, courage ! She will give you four-and-twenty hours' grace, or she is no woman. Had the proposal been a prudent one, I should say nothing ; but I have ever observed, that when a girl takes a bit of devilry into her head, it is far from being easy to get it out again."

"You do not know her ; and to speak frankly, Wolfenstein, you cannot comprehend her. At any rate, even were it possible to hope that she would forgive the insult on explanation, can I imagine that the heiress of Dallheimer would throw herself into the arms of one who, by his own confession, is a ruined gamester, a beggar, and a desperado ?"

"Tut, tut, you do not know the sex. For a woman to love is to be in a dream, knowing that it is so ; and yet acting, in spite of herself, as if all was reality. She takes beggary for riches ; want for fulness ; shrieking for laughter ; a suit of rags for a robe of honour : yet feels at the same time that the whole is delusion. In vain she will try to snap the bonds of this strong fancy ; for twisted up as they are with her heart-strings (the heart and imagination being blended in woman, which in man are distinct), they must both break together."

"This may be true of the sex in general," said Benzel, with a sigh, "but there are those in whom the understanding is as powerful as the affections ; and of such is Ida Dallheimer. Words, however, are useless ; she is by this time a prisoner in the centre of her mother's house."

"Nay, now you talk like a man of sense. Words alone, in such a case, are indeed useless; but come—there is a hand that never flinched from friend or foe! I know the house well, and, although it is close to a station of cavalry, I ask but your own assistance, and that of two of my servants, to liberate your mistress this very night!"

"Thanks, Wolfenstein! but it is scarcely possible that I should obtain her consent to such a measure, even had I an opportunity of getting speech of her, and dared to make use of it."

"Surely not; you must set her at liberty first, and then give her the option to return to her bonds. No! Why then I wash my hands of you. But the sun begins already to peep over the hills, and it is time for us, spirits of darkness, to hide ourselves from daylight. Meet me at dinner, when we shall talk over the affair more coolly; and in the mean time, count among the friends, who are willing to serve you with heart and steel, the baron of Wolfenstein." And so saying he grasped the hand of his late adversary, who returned the pressure with fingers as cold and hard as marble, and entering the gate of Saint Adalbert, returned into the city.

When Carl was left alone, he debated with himself as to what it was necessary to do, not with regard to his mistress, for till night-fall he could not even approach her house, but with regard to himself. The baron had said that he looked "like a man who had lost his last dollar," and this was literally the case. He had not only lost his last dollar, but, what was still worse, had failed in procuring funds to stop the mouths of a crowd of importunate creditors. Before the dinner hour, when he had tacitly promised to meet Wolfenstein, he would in all probability be unable to procure one by his own order. His house was probably by this time in the hands of bailiffs; and, what was maddening to think of at the present moment, the blood-hounds of the law were perhaps already sent out in pursuit of his person. This was the day to which he had looked forward, half in hope, half in trembling, for many months. To meet

the payments, which could no longer be deferred, he had risked everything, and lost everything ; and for the opportunity of making the desperate venture, he had, as it appeared, sacrificed his mistress herself.

It was necessary, however, to ascertain, not the extent of his danger, which he knew, but the precise moment of its approach ; for the demon had already whispered in the depths of the gamester's heart, that, by means of a loan from one of his friends, he might yet be able, by some miracle of chance, to redeem himself from utter ruin. It was, at all events, necessary to attempt to secure his papers, and those little nothings which have no pecuniary value, but yet are more precious than gold to the possessor ; and plunging into the thickest parts of the shrubbery, in the walks which occupy the site of what formerly were the ditches of the town, the once gay and gallant Carl Benzel stole round to the gate of Cologne like an assassin.

His caution proved to be necessary ; for before reaching his own street, he was met by one of the servants, not yet steeled enough by his profession to be ungrateful, who had come out on purpose to inform his master that the house was already invested by bailiffs, and that officers were at this moment in search of his person in the various places of nocturnal resort. The game was now at a close. The city was shut against him. The only property he possessed in the world, besides the apparel he wore, was the guitar which still hung upon his shoulder. He thought of sending a message to the baron of Wolfenstein—but for what purpose ? To *beg* ? To him, without even the chance which the gaming table afforded—pecuniary assistance would not now be a loan, but a charity ; and Carl, low as he had sunk, could not yet brook the humiliating idea.

On a small estate, in the neighbourhood of Borcete, that he had lately sold piecemeal, there was an old dilapidated building, which once boasted the name of chateau. It stood upon a parcel of land latest sacrificed, and had not yet, so far as he was aware, been taken possession of by the new owner. Carl had a liking to the place, from a tradition which told that, in

early times, it had been a stronghold of his ancestors ; although in fact his family, according to all modern accounts, had but little claim to the honour of antiquity. It had even been his intention, or rather one of his favourite dreams, to re-build the chateau from its ruins ; and, in his earlier acquaintanceship with the Dallheimers, before his follies, or waning fortune, had compelled the prudent and worldly-minded mother to give him his congé, Ida and he had frequently wandered among its desolate courts, weaving together, as if with one imagination, the rose-coloured visions of love. This house of desolation was inhabited, till it should be claimed by the purchaser, by an old female servant of the family. The woman had been Carl's nurse ; and when his attention was now drawn to her abode, as the only spot where he could hope to find a safe shelter from foes or foul weather, a pang shot through his breast while he remembered the neglect with which he had of late treated one, who had acted towards him a portion of the mother's part, and who had always looked upon him with a mother's affection.

Cursing the infatuation, which seemed to have changed even the current of his natural feelings, he walked hastily away, in the direction of the ruined chateau ; but the morning was now considerably advanced, and the road was crowded with peasants, whose respectful salutations seemed to his conscious imagination to be fraught with significance. Unable longer to endure what he supposed to be their scrutiny, he determined to abandon his intention of seeking shelter till after night-fall, and to spend the day in wandering among the hills, and in recruiting his wearied senses by sleep in some retired wood. He had not forsaken the public road many minutes when he had reason to applaud his prudence ; for a carriage, attended by horsemen, passed at full speed, and a handkerchief was waved to him from the window, which showed that the travellers knew him.

Turning away his head in a kind of panic, he quickened his pace almost to a flight, and had speedily the satisfaction of placing a hill between him and the faces

of his kind, which had now become objects either of fear or hatred.

It is not our purpose to follow his wanderings during this miserable day. When he slept, he awoke grappling with his visionary pursuers ; or, having been taken, saw through the bars of his prison-window the nuptial procession of Ida, and broke his slumber in a vain attempt to tear them away. The day at length began sensibly to decline ; a cold north-west wind blew in dreary gusts along the hills ; the sky was gradually obscured by misty clouds, and by-and-by a heavy and continuous rain began to fall. It was now time to betake himself to the window of his mistress ; and, insensible to the weather, Carl sprang with renewed energy towards the house of Madame Dallheimer.

It was not till he had cleared the garden wall that he paused. Perhaps his physical sufferings, including the want of food—although this was unfelt in the sensation of hunger—had combined with the agony of his mind to unnerve him ; for he was under the necessity of leaning for some moments against a tree for support, while drops of cold perspiration stood upon his brow. If the fears of Ida were correct, and she had actually been removed into an inner apartment, what step was he to take ? But if still accessible, in what mode was his avowal to be made ? What was the purpose of his visit ? Did he mean to tell her that he had refused the most precious of all gifts, that he might have time to rush into ruin, and render himself still more than ever unworthy of her ? Was he to confess that, when he declared that “the sun should never again look upon his follies,” it was only a base and unworthy juggle to cheat her understanding through her ear ; for that at the very moment when he repeated the words, he was about to hasten from her presence to repeat a madness too monstrous for the eye of day ? A strange confusion appeared to have stolen over his faculties. He forgot the nature of the deliberations in which he had been engaged for the last twelve hours. So far from being able to call to mind the words in which he had intended to have addressed his mistress, even the lead-

ing ideas had escaped him. He was beneath her window before being conscious of any thing but the wish to see her once more, to kneel at her feet, to proclaim his own unworthiness, and to fly from her presence for ever.

He struck the guitar with a trembling hand. There was no reply. He attempted to sing, more from habit than intention ; but, shocked at the voice which proceeded from his frozen lips; he ceased suddenly, and swept the chords of the instrument so fiercely that the sound rung like a shriek through the grove. When it died away, all was as still as before. The silence was intense, and seemed to be preserved rather than broken by the far-off wail of the wind, from which this spot was protected by the hill.

Benzel became alarmed. He stood upon the ledge of the wall, and raising himself up, endeavoured to look into his mistress's casement—the shutters were closed. The next window was barricaded in the same way—and the next and the next. She was then removed into the interior ! But the unusual stillness, the death-like silence of the whole house ! He resolved not to leave the spot till he had solved the mystery ; and his anxiety to see Ida was now merged in the sole wish to know what had become of her. It is strange to observe the fantastic tricks of the imagination under such circumstances. "*She is dead!*" cried he to himself, with a sudden shiver, and without reflecting on the consequence of a step which a few moments before he would have deemed of such importance, he rushed round to the principal door, and knocked so loud and long that the whole neighbourhood resounded with the din. Even to this there was no answer ; but, on his repeating the application, a thin querulous voice within uttered faintly some religious supplication for protection, and a trembling hand began to withdraw the bolts.

When at length an old female servant whom he knew, put out her face, while the play of the lamp which she shaded with her shrivelled hand, gave an air of ghastliness to her expression of terror, the visitor

stared on her without being able for some moments to utter a word.

"Madame Dallheiher?" at last he stammered.

"She is gone, and all the family."

"Where?" demanded Carl faintly.

"I cannot tell; it was kept a secret from the very servants who accompanied them."

"When?"

"Early in the morning."

"Escorted?"

"By four of the domestics, mounted and armed."

This was the carriage he had seen when he forsook the public road! It was Ida herself who had waved her handkerchief to him, either in derision or farewell! The young man groaned aloud, and staggered from the door without uttering another word.

Ida was lost to him for ever! Well did he know her mother's strength of purpose, as well as worldly cunning. The very direction they had taken was probably a feigned one; and even had he been provided with funds for the journey, pursuit would be hopeless. He had confessed to his mistress what were his habits of life; and when, instead of spurning him with horror and contempt, she had broken through the rules of her sex's modesty, and offered herself for his acceptance, he had refused the gift without a word of explanation. This was the damning position in which he stood. It was vain to speculate on the signal from the carriage—no ingenuity could draw from it a ray of comfort. Ida had been deceived, insulted, rejected; her love by this time was only the memory of a weakness; her anger would grow into hatred, her hatred fade into forgetfulness; and, if ever the changing tide of human affairs should throw him in her way again, he would find her the wife of a man worthy of her love, her beauty, her attainments, rank and fortune.

Scarcely conscious of his present object or destination, Carl Benzel found himself entering the court of the old chateau, where he had intended in the morning to seek shelter. The broken walls, the long grass, mingled with docks and nettles, that filled up the area

between, the black and ruinous appearance of the mansion itself, and the wailing sound of the night wind, answered by creaking doors, and flapping shutters in the interior, in many places open to the elements, conspired to produce a scene of desolation such as he had never witnessed before. When last on the spot, with Ida leaning on his arm, that old house was a fairy palace for the imagination to revel in! Shivering at the contrast he approached the door.

His low knock was unanswered ; he knocked again, louder and louder. The sound echoed through the interior, and dying away in the distant galleries, left all as silent as before. He tried the latch, but without hope, and it yielded to his hand. When he entered, the wind bursting in at the same time rushed through the passage with a violence that shook the whole house. The flapping of doors, rattling of windows, and rustling of hangings, told of the intrusion in the remotest apartments ; and Carl fancied, with German excitability, that a sound of unearthly laughter mingled in the distance with the din. The next moment the hall door shut behind him with a noise like a clap of thunder, and he found himself in utter darkness.

Groping through the passage, he at length found his way, although with considerable difficulty, to the apartment that was tenanted by his nurse. The old woman was doubtless in bed and asleep, having left the outer door unfastened either through the forgetfulness of age, or in the security of conscious poverty. On entering he was no longer in absolute darkness ; for the moon, having struggled through the thick clouds that had all the evening enveloped her, threw a spectral gleam into the room. He was so far correct, old Christine was in bed ; but the confusion that reigned throughout the apartment made him fear that she was confined there by illness. He at first hesitated to disturb her ; but his clothes were completely soaked, and he already felt the sensations that precede a fever induced by cold. It was necessary if possible to obtain a fire ; but he knew not where to find the materials.

“Christine !” said he, softly ; and then in a louder

whisper. No answer. The old woman slept soundly. He approached the bed : she seemed to have read herself asleep, for a book was still in her hand—and in that book the young man recognized, with an emotion that of late had been a stranger to his breast, a Bible which had been presented to her by his mother. He shook her gently.

"Christine!" He took the book from her fingers ; but she did not stir. A cold thrill ran through the veins of the foster-son, and putting his hand hastily upon her brow, he perceived that he stood by the side of a corpse.

A withering feeling of remorse beset the mind of Carl Benzel ; for he concluded that his old nurse had died in destitution, perhaps in hunger ; but in a few moments a stronger beam of the moon disclosed some provisions and a few copper coins upon the table at the bed side ; and the re-action produced by this relief was so great that he was able to search for the tinder in some composure of mind, and at length succeeded in lighting a fire. It would have been a strange spectacle to see in that desolate mansion, and most desolate room, a youth, evidently of the higher ranks of society, with dripping and disordered dress, seated by the bed-side, his elbow leaning on the bed, and his face resting on his hand, while he gazed the live-long night upon the face of a corpse !

In the grey dawn of the morning he dug a grave in the garden, and with such religious service as he could perform, committed the body to the earth. He then removed the articles of furniture that were absolutely necessary, to a smaller and more distant apartment, where he took up his solitary abode.

A low fever began to prey upon the sources of life ; and this was at times accompanied by a certain aberration of mind. The Bible, to which his attention had been attracted, as it seemed to him by an especial providence, was now rarely out of his hand ; but disturbed by the recollection of the theological dogmas which had perplexed his days of study, the book the best calculated to soothe and enlighten, only exasperated his disease of body and mind. In the mean time no human being

came near the house ; which, in fact, lay under an imputation, too readily attached to old women and old mansions, of being haunted by evil spirits. Christine had been rarely seen by the neighbours at any time, and now that she did not appear at all it is no wonder that she was speedily forgotten.

Carl Benzel was thus left to his fever and his frenzy ; amusing himself with understanding the Bible backwards, as a witch's prayer should be recited ; his love cooling as his brain heated, and his enthusiasm fast sinking into confirmed insanity.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE HERO BECOMES A VAGABOND.

The château, as we have said, having the reputation of being haunted, the circumstance of a light being sometimes seen flitting from window to window at night excited no surprise, although much consternation. A hamlet containing between twenty and thirty souls, formed the entire human neighbourhood ; the spot being shut in by a circle of hills from the rest of the inhabited world. The loneliness of the place, indeed, was its chief recommendation. No one could have conceived that, on climbing an eminence of a hundred paces, he should at once find himself on the brink of a thickly-peopled valley, with a great town in the midst ; yet it had been a favourite project of Carl Benzel, in the days of his glory, to cut a vista through the mount, opposite the windows of a particular room, so that, at one moment surrounded by the most entire solitude, he might the next, if his caprice willed it, be within the view and hearing of

“—the hum, the crowd, the shock of men.”

The disappearance of old Christine had excited little or no remark at the time it took place ; yet now it

was somehow or other connected in the imagination of the neighbours with the mysterious lights. The poor woman had died, it was thought, either in the house, or after she had left it to return to her own home, wherever that might be ; and now her spirit was supposed, by a natural process of ratiocination, to haunt the spot which in life she had loved so well as seldom to be tempted to leave it—unless when her rheumatic lameness allowed.

There was one inhabitant of the hamlet, however, who had imbibed, in the course of her intromissions with the town, in the quality of a trafficker in eggs, a portion of its heresies ; and she declared that the new inmates of the château could be no other than a band of robbers, who, after playing their pranks in wealthier quarters, took refuge here, as in a place too retired to be within the ken of the police. Liese was a pretty young girl, high-spirited and good-tempered, who always brought her eggs to a fair market ; for there was hardly a gay young bachelor in Aix-la-Chapelle who did not deal with her, in the hope (continually disappointed) of getting a kiss from her rich and ruby lips into the bargain. She cared not a pin for ghosts, living too innocently, and sleeping too soundly to be troubled by their visits. She concluded that the old woman had left the house many days ago, and thought it no want of charity to believe that the new-comers, who only stirred at night, and were invisible during the day, were persons of very so-so character.

By degrees, however, the question took a stronger hold upon her lively imagination. Her curiosity was roused. If the strangers were robbers, how did it happen that no one had ever seen them enter or leave the house ; while, at the same time, they took not the slightest precaution to conceal their residence there, but carried a candle openly from window to window, or left it burning all night in one of the worst and remotest apartments ? Liese thought of these seeming contradictions till she determined to unravel them ; and being aware that it would be in vain to request the aid even

of the stoutest heart in the hamlet, she set out alone on the adventure.

Her choosing the night-time for the exploit may seem to have been an useless expenditure of courage; but it in reality arose from fear. When a younger girl, she had been accustomed to play with her companions in every corner of the deserted mansion, and thus possessed a knowledge of the localities far superior to any that could have been obtained by the strangers in a few days' acquaintance with the premises. She, in fact, knew how to enter the house without troubling the latch of the door at all; and if detected in her progress to the upper apartments, could make her escape by passages in which any other than one accustomed to them from childhood would require the clue of Ariadne.

The night she chose was dark, to conceal her form, and gusty, that her reasonably light tread might not be heard; and, having screwed her courage to the sticking place, she stole out of her cottage, glided round the end of the château, climbed like a cat to a window several yards from the ground, unfastened it by inserting her hand through a broken pane, and, in another minute, found herself panting, more from mental excitement than bodily exertion, on the great staircase. She paused to listen; then bounded, like a deer, up a dozen steps; and paused again. Here she heard a man's voice, and her heart began to quake. In another moment pride mastered fear, and advancing more cautiously, she put back her hair from her ears, and endeavoured to catch the purport of his words. The tone was not conversational. It put her in mind of a declamation on the stage, or an address from the pulpit. The speaker paused frequently, and sometimes in an interrogative manner, yet there was no answer. Liese became less afraid every moment, and more eager after discovery; and at length, in a passion of curiosity, she darted up the remaining flight without pausing, till her ear was close to a door, through the chinks of which she perceived light; when she heard distinctly the following words pronounced in a feeble but musical and manly voice:

“ ‘ My days are past, my purposes are broken off,
even the thoughts of my heart.

“ ‘ They change the night into day ; the light is short
because of darkness.

“ ‘ If I wait, the grave is mine home ; I have made my
bed in the darkness.

“ ‘ I have said to corruption, thou art my father ; to
the worm, thou art my mother and my sister.

“ ‘ He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass,
and he hath set darkness in my path.

“ ‘ He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the
crown from my head.

“ ‘ He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am
gone ; and my hope he hath removed like a tree.

“ ‘ My harp is also turned to mourning, and my voice
into the voice of them that weep.

“ ‘ My skin is black upon me, and my bones are
burnt with heat.

“ ‘ I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to
owls.’ ”

This singular lament, which poor Liese imagined to
be the spontaneous outpouring of a troubled heart,
filled her with compassion. She knocked gently at the
door. A sudden stir took place in the interior, and
she could hear the sound of a man’s foot upon the floor.
While uncertain what to do, the stranger spoke again —

“ ‘ His troops come together, and raise up their array
against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle’ —
Come on, ye sons of Belial, for I will sell my life by
the inch ! ‘ O earth, cover thou not my blood.’ ”
Liese opened the door in a panic, for she imagined that
a crowd of the expected enemies were on the stairs,
and women are always on the side of the minority. A
young man stood in the middle of the floor, leaning
with one hand upon a chair for support, while with the
other he strove in vain to steady his sword, which he
pointed towards the door. His countenance was pale
and haggard, and a cluster of matted locks, as black as
the raven’s wing, hung over the forehead ; beneath
which a pair of eyes gleamed with so strange a lustre
as to give an unearthly character to the whole head.

Liese saw at once that the unhappy stranger was in the delirium of fever, and she retreated some steps, uncertain what to do.

"Get thee gone," said he, "get thee behind me! The day of temptation is over, and hell shall not prevail against me." His words became fainter; his sword fell from the trembling hand that held it; and before Liese could reach him he had sunk fainting on the floor.

With some difficulty she lifted him up, and put him to bed; and while doing so had an opportunity of scanning more closely his wan and wasted features. What was her surprise to identify them with those of the gay, the gallant, the handsome, the generous Carl Benzel! He had some time since been one of the most unfortunate of those customers who were wont to pay her in round money for her eggs, demanding kisses in change; and Liese had even confessed to herself, although to no one else, that if such transactions had not been altogether out of her way, Carl Benzel should be the purchaser. A stronger interest, therefore, attached to him now than that excited merely by his illness and destitute situation; and she considered with extreme anxiety what was best to be done.

It was evident by his retiring to such a place, that he was under a cloud—probably on account of some fatal duel; while it was not less evident that his fever was occasioned or exasperated by unwholesome diet. She saw nothing in the shape of provisions in the room, except some rank vegetables from the wilderness behind the house, that had once been the garden; and these the unhappy young man appeared to have been accustomed to boil, and eat without bread or salt. It was therefore necessary, at the same time, to supply him with proper food and necessaries, and to conceal, even from her simple neighbours, the fact of his residence there at all.

The steps she took to effect the latter object were laborious. The room in which he lodged, overlooking the dark and melancholy court, was directly opposite the hamlet; and she removed her patient, therefore, with all his household chattels, to a more convenient

apartment behind, which commanded an uninterrupted view of the country. This done, she returned home to her cottage for warm milk and other wholesome provisions ; and, in short, before the morning dawn, succeeded in making the object of her compassion as comfortable as circumstances would allow. It was some days before her tender treatment, together with the medicine she brought from the town, had their due effect ; but at length, Carl Benzel began to open his eyes, and take cognizance of the things around him.

At first his perceptions were confused ; and seeing only the viands that were placed beside him, while the donor was invisible, for Liese paid her visits of mercy during the night, when he was asleep, he concluded that he was fed, like the prophet Elijah, by supernatural agency. Even the sight and recognition of his young nurse failed to restore his memory. He could not conceive how he had come to be on terms of such intimacy and good neighbourhood with the pretty market-girl of Aix-la-Chapelle. But when at length, by slow degrees, his real situation broke upon his view, a feeling of bitter shame, succeeded by hopeless despondency, threatened him with a dangerous relapse.

The latter state of mind was the consequence of the weakness of his nerves, produced by the disease from which he was just recovering ; and Liese, like a skilful doctress, saw that the moment was come for more generous treatment. She nourished him with wine, and with rich and fragrant soups ; and, by means of the concoctions of the apothecary, soothed his wounded spirit, and closed his wakeful eyes in sound and invigorating sleep.

One morning he awoke from a tranquil slumber, which had continued from the forenoon of the preceding day. The birds without were singing in full chorus ; the sun brightening his chamber walls ; and a crowd of sparrows pecking at the casement. Carl rose from his bed instinctively and threw open the window, and leaned out. The freshness of the breeze that fanned his pale brow seemed to infuse in him a new life. The green and sunny fields, the trees, bedding and quiver-

ing as if to keep time with the music that filled their branches ; the sloping hills carrying the eye and imagination to that blue distance, which is the country of hope ; all seemed to enter, with magical influence, into the very depths of his soul. His breath came freer and stronger ; his bosom rose with a sensation of power that had long been a stranger to it ; and he felt his veins tingle with pleasure as the current of life ran boundingly through them. Love, that lives in a paradise of the fancy, is inseparably associated with the beauties of nature ; and the idea of his lost Ida rose in the midst, like a spirit. The river, whose bitter waters had hitherto seemed to roll between them like another Acheron, was half hidden by flowers, and the wantoning birds dipped their wings in it as they fluttered past. Carl's cheek glowed, and his eye brightened as he gazed upon the picture before him of mingled illusion and reality ; and turning away with a firm step, he proceeded to arrange his dress, and prepare for a sortie into the world.

Liese, although a skilful doctress, was but little acquainted with the mysteries of the action and reaction that take place between the mind and body ; and the resuscitation of her patient seemed to her like the effect of enchantment. She, however, persuaded him to remain two days longer under her care ; and then ventured timidly to ask him whither it was his intention to direct his steps. This was the most embarrassing question that could have been proposed to Carl Benzel.

" All places," said he, with a sigh, " are nearly alike to me. I cannot, in the meantime, return to Aix-la-Chapelle, and I know not where to find the friend whom I go to seek."

" You mean the daughter of Madame Dallheimer ?" said Liese, archly : " but never start, for it was by no sorcery that I discovered your secret. Your mind and your lips were busier during the fever than you may now imagine, and I think I can tell what is your present situation as well as yourself. You have lost your fortune at the gaming-table ; but at your age, and with your capabilities, that is no great matter. Your mis-

tress has been spirited away from you ; but a little bird has whispered in my ear at least the direction they have taken." Carl caught her suddenly in his arms, and almost smothered her with kisses.

" My life was nothing," said he, " I scarcely thank you for the gift ; but oh, Liese ! how can I repay you for the hope—that life of life—which you have now given me ?"

" Not in that way, certainly," replied the market-girl, pouting, as she re-adjusted her cap. " I have seen the day when you broke me a basket of eggs without doing half the damage ! But come, that is a trifle : in what way do you propose to travel ?"

" I have a friend in the town, baron Wolsenstein, who would willingly accommodate me with money, and perhaps accompany me in the adventure."

" Alas ! you forget the length of your illness. The baron, I happen to know, has been gone many days ; for when you raved of him as your friend I endeavoured to find him out. Know you any other to whom you could apply ?" Carl's eyes fell beneath the clear, proud-looking glance of hers.

" It is needless to conceal it," said he ; " the respectable friends of my family have abandoned me, and my comrades were merely associates in folly, who possess neither the power, nor perhaps the will to assist me." Liese was silent for some moments.

" Were I a man," said she at last, while her glad eye flashed with enthusiasm ; " were I a man such as you, I would care neither for the favour of friends nor the malice of foes. I would hang my sword by my side, and sling my guitar upon my shoulder, and with a high heart and lightsome look go forth to follow my mistress over hill and heath, and through wood and valley. There is no peasant in all our father-land so churlish as to shut his door against the minstrel, and no cottage maid so insensible that her heart may not be opened by the twang of the wandering guitar."

" And at last," said Carl mournfully, and yet half yielding, in spite of himself, to an impulse, which in youth sends the current of the blood dancing through

the veins, “suppose me at length arrived at my destination—suppose me at the feet of the heiress of Dallheimer——”

“ In her arms! in her arms!”

“ Would she do less than spurn the outcast and vagabond, who came to beg her love and her charity in a breath?”

“ *You a man!*” cried Liese, “ ha! ha!” and her laugh rang through the old house. “ *You presume to kiss the lips of a pretty girl like me!* Were you in rags, Ida Dallheimer would clothe you; were your way-faring feet torn with brambles, or stung with adders, she would suck the wounds with her mouth; were you in prison, she would draw you out, if it could not be done but by a cord woven of the tresses of her long fair hair; were you on the gallows tree, she would tend and watch and cheer you to the last; and then sit down beneath your feet and die. And why should she do this? Why abandon home, and friends, and riches, and honour, to cleave to poverty, and disgrace, and death? Do you ask why? O man! man! because she loves, and is a woman!”

While speaking, and for some moments after, her cheek burned, her eye flashed, the veins of her forehead swelled, and her bosom throbbed as if it would burst the corsage; but soon these phenomena of her sex’s emotion disappeared; and heaving a deep sigh, she shook away some large bright drops from her eyelids, and continued more calmly.

“ Having received a hint of Madam Dallheimer’s intended departure in the morning, I went, the night before, to bid farewell to a friend; and was introduced by her into an inner apartment, where she meant to gratify my curiosity with the sight of some new dresses before they were packed up for the journey. It was here that I overheard the direction and destination of the travellers; for Madame and her major-domo passing through the room, we were obliged to conceal ourselves behind a screen till they were gone. I afterwards saw the young lady coming from her own apartment in the north wing. Her face was flushed, and her step quick and re-

solute ; but when she observed the preparations for the journey, she became as pale as marble, and seemed ready to faint. I knew of the love that was between you, for I had often seen you here, and more than once, out of curiosity, followed you in your evening visits, as far as the garden wall. I looked at her significantly as she passed, trying to say with my eyes, ‘my poor young lady, can I do anything for you ?’ and she observed me ; for a gleam of hope lighted up her countenance for a moment ; a struggle of some kind took place ; and she half opened her lips to address me. But at that instant her mother’s voice was heard calling her name ; and her hasty step entering the passage. Ida’s lips closed at the sound ; her almost opening heart folded its leaves anew ; she shrunk as if within herself ; and wringing her hands, which she then pressed wildly on her brow and bosom, turned silently away.”

Carl drank in these words with a greediness that seemed to dread the loss of a syllable. He was almost suffocated with emotion.

“ My noble, my high-minded, my pure-hearted,” ejaculated he in a broken voice, “ my great, my good—my poor, poor Ida !” and the sobs, which he could no longer control, burst forth convulsively from his labouring bosom, and the once gay and reckless gallant, leaning his head upon the shoulder of Liese, fairly wept aloud.

The two strangely-assorted companions, having ascertained that the coast was clear, left the château by the back window, by means of which Liese was accustomed to enter ; the latter having determined to accompany her portégé to the end of the valley. As they walked on, her spirits seemed to desert her ; and Carl, although less sad than before, was plunged in meditation.

“ Do you dread the hazard of the journey ?” said Liese, at length. “ Do you shrink from the degradation you may suffer in travelling without money ? How different that is with me ! I have often wished, I have long wished, that—~~that~~—” and she fixed her eyes,

with a deep, longing gaze, upon the blue distance before them, and stopped abruptly.

"How delightful," she resumed, "must be the vicissitudes of the life of a wanderer! To look upon other hills than those you have been accustomed to from infancy; to gaze upon strange faces and strange lands—."

"What is it that you have long wished?" demanded Carl gently.

"That I might,"—replied Liese, with the same incoherence, and blushing deeply—"I only wished that—that I were a man!"

"My dear Liese," said he, with a grave tenderness, while he put his arm round her waist, as they walked side by side—"my dear sister, my best friend, to wish that you were other than what you are, a true-hearted, simple-minded woman, is a crime against nature and humanity. Beware of the life of a wanderer, which is the most unfit for you, or rather, for which you are the most unfit of all the daughters of Eve! Your high and daring spirit; your frank and guileless disposition; your youth; your beauty;—O Liese, promise me that till you obtain the protection of a husband, you will remain at home, the light and love of your own valley!"

"I will not promise," replied Liese, almost sullenly; "where is the use of such an exaction? I have no money; and I cannot play the guitar, or sing such lays as used to float at night, like a dream, over the garden of Madame Dallheimer. And as for a husband, holy Mary! would you have me wed one of the clods of the earth? one of the base cur-hearted churls who shuddered when they beheld the light in your window, supposing it to be borne by the ghost of old Christine! A wanderer! No, no; I must live where I am planted, bright, sharp and bitter, like a holly in a hedge, respected by its more vulgar neighbours—because it can stop a gap just as well as the rest."

"You will live, Liese, where you have been planted, like a rose, diffusing freshness, and fragrance, and beauty around you; and if I return successful from that

far world which appears so beautiful to you, because its pits and precipices are covered with the veil of distance, you shall share, like a sister, in my good fortune."

They were now on the ridge of the hill which bounded the further extremity of the valley, and both stood still simultaneously. Carl took out his shirt-brooch, which was set with a stone of some value, and stuck it in Liese's collar, requesting at the same time, a common pin in exchange. She resisted for some moments; but perceiving the curl of his lip, and the flush of his brow, at what he felt as an insult to his poverty, she at length complied. He would then have kissed her, with a muttered farewell; but courtseying low, she raised his hand to her lips, as is the custom in some parts of Germany when an inferior receives a reward or a present, and walked silently away. Carl, grieved and somewhat hurt by her apparent caprice, looked after her reproachfully for some moments; but turning round at a little distance, she saw him in this attitude, and, on the instant, bounded back again with a sudden cry, threw herself into his extended arms, kissed his lips, and hiding her face in his bosom, sobbed bitterly. Then, as if ashamed of her emotion, she raised her head with a bashful but sunny smile, and fled with the swiftness of a deer towards the village.

Some days after the departure of Carl Benzel, Liese, whose restless mind seemed to require employment, forsook her chickens and eggs, one evening, to go and visit the old woman who was left in charge of Madame Dallheimer's mansion; and from her she heard a piece of intelligence that was exceedingly interesting in the present state of her feelings.

It appeared that only the evening before, a man, in the livery of a servant, had called at the house, to "fish" out of the old woman, as she expressed it, some information regarding the whereabouts of Benzel. He said that he had a letter to deliver to him from a lady, and that he had searched all Aix-la-Chapelle in vain, where he could only learn that the imprudent young man had ruined himself at the gaming-table, and fled from his creditors. *A letter from a lady!* What could have

induced the bearer to extend his researches to Madame Dallheimer's house, where the person he sought had not visited publicly for many months ? There was only one way of accounting for this ; and on hearing that the old woman had pointed out the direction in which Benzel had gone on the evening he left her, she hurried home.

It was dark when she reached the village ; and Liese could almost have fancied that her protégé had returned to his lodgings, for a light burned as she had first seen it, in the window of his original chamber. After some minutes it proceeded to the next, and the next, and the next, and then descended in the same way from floor to floor, till it reached the kitchen. Liese, in the mean time, had approached the house rapidly, while continuing her observations ; and finding that the front door was fastened, she glided round to the window behind, which she had so often made use of herself for entrance and egress.

In a few minutes she saw the light above her head ; but it instantly disappeared, and a man leaped to the ground beside her.

" Stay friend," said she, " I would speak with you." The stranger grasped a pistol in his belt, and at the same moment she felt her eyes blinded with the glare of a dark lantern.

" Who are you ?" demanded he, sternly.

" A friend to him for whom you bear a letter. He follows the Dallheimers on the same route. If you ride hard for six hours, to-morrow morning you will overtake him."

" That is not in my commission," replied he. " I have already done all that I promised."

" To whom did you promise ?"

" What is that to you, my pretty lass ? Do you know the baron of Wolfenstein ? It was to him I promised."

" I know the baron well ; but I should not have suspected him of any kindness of this sort to his friend. Come from where it may, however, it will be welcome. Give me the letter, I undertake to deliver it."

" Let me see you at Aix-la-Chapelle then ; there is my address ; the letter is locked up in my portmanteau. But you will, of course, pay the postage thus far ? Come, I will not be unreasonable ; nay, if you resist so just a demand _____"

" Give me the letter first. I will pay no postage till you deliver it into my hand."

" But then—I may depend upon your honesty ?"

" You may : I shall be with you early in the morning."

The next morning Liese packed up her movables in a small bundle ; and taking leave of her native village, without knowing, and perhaps without caring, whether she should ever see it again, set out to visit the stranger at his lodgings in Aix-la-Chapelle. So far as she could observe him in the dark, he had not been in livery when she saw him ; but servants are not always in one dress, and although a bold, manly-looking fellow, there was nothing in his air or manner which could falsify the old woman's impression of his rank. The house indicated in the card, however, was so handsome a building, that she paused in some perplexity before ringing the bell. Her new friend, as she understood, had travelled alone. He did not, therefore, live with his master, and it was preposterous to suppose that he could lodge in so elegant a mansion at his own charge. Who should she ask for, was her next reflection ; and as the handle of the bell sprung from her hand, she was half tempted to run away.

" Have the goodness to walk in, mademoiselle," said the lacquey : he opened the door, bowing to the ground. Mademoiselle walked in, and was conducted through a suite of splendid apartments to a smaller one, where her companion of the preceding evening awaited her, sipping coffee, and turning over the leaves of the journals. He was a man nearer forty than thirty years of age, and of a rough and weather-beaten appearance. His manner, however, was good and almost dignified ; and Liese felt as if she was in the presence of one of the magnates of the land.

The paper, it appeared—for it was not in the form of

a letter, but was merely a few lines traced with a pencil on the blank leaf of a book—was dropped from a carriage, as the stranger passed. It was inscribed “With haste, for love of courtesy or gain;” and being at any rate in his way to Aix-la-Chapelle, he determined to take charge of it. Meeting soon after on the road his friend the baron of Wolfenstein, and mentioning the subject to him, the latter, being deeply interested in the parties, exacted a promise that he would use every reasonable exertion to discover the person to whom the document was addressed, and place it in his hands. The contents were as follows.

“ Can you explain the enigma in your conduct? If so, I will not be unjust. When I saw you from the carriage window, you were in an agitation that could not be referred to any ordinary calamity. I am on my way to my mother’s house at Treves. “ I.”

Whether Liese paid the postage or not; what was the nature of her conversation with her new friend; whether she succeeded in delivering the above epistle to Carl Benzel; and sundry other matters connected with the present interview, we must defer treating of till another period of the history. At present we can only mention, consistently with our plan, that the pretty dealer in eggs and withholder of kisses, was never more seen in the market of Aix-la-Chapelle.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRAVELS OF CARL BENZEL.

Liese’s account of the hospitality of her father-land was not altogether correct. The feeling, possibly, may have existed, but the practice was modified by circumstan-

ces. Some were too poor, and some too timid, to extend a welcome to the wandering minstrel ; and some, stripped of the greater part of their means in the late troubles, growled over the remainder with the jealousy of a hungry mastiff. Carl Benzel, however, although suffering strange vicissitudes, never found himself in absolute want. There was something in his appearance which commanded the respect of many, and conciliated the affections of more ; and it generally happened with him, as with all others in calamity, that the churlishness of the men was amply made up for by the benevolence of the women.

His dress and manner presented so striking a contrast to his ostensible rank in society, that he was more frequently the object of curiosity as well as sympathy ; but, for the most part, it must be confessed that he was allowed to pass merely as one who paid reasonably well with his music for the entertainment afforded him. In Germany, even on the borders, music is always an article that is worth money ; and Carl, whose way of life had been somewhat of the wildest, was well acquainted with the songs likely to please the ear of the peasants. His own taste, indeed, seemed to assort marvellously well with theirs. Lays of unfortunate love, and premature death, and barbarous mothers, and bloody-minded guardians, were his staple commodities ; and, mingling with them, came the wild fantastic legends that people the rocks and forests of his native country with the most original of hobgoblins. The state of mind, which gave forth, spontaneously and habitually, such strains, was clearly depicted in his countenance. A deep melancholy sat on his high pale brow ; but the eyes beneath were lighted up by fitful gleams of enthusiasm that might have seemed the effect of the poet's inspiration. His Bible, in the intervals of song, was rarely out of his hand ; and at times he was accustomed to read it aloud, with such comments as a heated imagination supplied, for the edification of those who would rather have listened to the ballad of the Wild Huntsman, or the Erl King. Whether in singing or lecturing, however, his singularly fine and mellow voice

procured him a willing audience ; and long after he had passed through the wild district of the Eifel, the dreams of many a mountain-maid were haunted by this remarkable stranger, who had appealed to the strongest sensibilities of a German woman, in his joint character of minstrel and apostle. Even the dress of our adventurer was well calculated to attract observation ; being characteristic not only of the country and the times, but of the individual. It consisted of a hussar cap with a gold band, a dark brown frock, and military boots that reached to the middle of the thigh. His neck and bosom were bare, for he wore neither stock nor kerchief ; his guitar was slung upon one shoulder, and over the other a small bundle or wallet was suspended upon a handsome sword.

Till after he had passed Cornelimunster, about three leagues on his route, where the citizens of Aix-la-Chapelle resort in pleasure parties to drink out of the cup of Saint Cornelius, our traveller did not dare to approach the highway. After this, however, he had less fear of being made captive, which, in his present feelings, would have been like a sentence of death : and he only deviated occasionally from the main-road in order to seek shelter in a reformed village, instead of passing the night in a Catholic one.

The country soon became wilder and more solitary. Lofty hills, covered with forests that seemed eternal, gave a dreary magnificence to the scene : and in such places, for instance, as the narrow valley of the Roer, it was with surprise that he saw a congregation of human dwellings, deserving the name of a town, set down in the deepest recess of the ravine. This was Monjoye. From hence to Kaltenhenberg, the route lay through a succession of marshes and mountains, the most dismal that can be imagined, in the midst of which is placed a bell, to be rung during the dangerous mists which sometimes descend like the shadow of death upon the traveller's path. Carl sung his way through everything, and leaving the mountains of the Schneifel to the left, the most sterile district in all the Eifel, arrived at the little town of Prum, founded before the days

of King Pepin. It was in the convent here that the son of Charlemagne did penance for his rebellion, and that the Emperor Lothaire laid down the sceptre for the crucifix, and died a monk.

While wandering along the road he fell in with a peasant, to whom he took the opportunity of explaining the just downfall of the Catholic religion, as typified in the ruin of this famous convent. He had to do, however, with a man steadfast in the cause, who could give a reason for the faith that was in him ; and from him he learnt the true cause both of the rise and fall of the establishment, as it is set forth in the following legend.

"In the days of Saint Ansband," said the peasant, "the fifth abbot of Prum, there was a young man admitted to the order under peculiar circumstances. He had gamed away his estate, and disgusted his father so much by his follies, that the old gentleman cast him off, and determined to leave his immense wealth to a religious house. In the meantime the son continued his addresses to a young lady, who really loved him, and by whose dowry he expected to retrieve his fortune. But she hearing of his misconduct, in the irritation of the moment treated him no better than his father had done ; whereupon the youth sunk into despondency, which ended in his assuming the cowl in the convent of Prum.

"This was followed, as might be supposed, by bitter repentance ; for the young lady, who had stayed only for entreaty on the part of her lover, no sooner heard of his irremediable step, than she came a watching and praying about the convent, and wandering about the walls, wringing her hands, from morning until night. In vain the monk laid the matter before his abbot, with the view of obtaining a dispensation for his return into the world : the holy father only laughed at so silly an affair, and told him jocosely that till he could bestow gifts upon the house equal to his own lost fortune and his mistress's dowry together, he must stay where he was.

"The monk at last sickened, and, believing himself about to be dying, ordered that he should be carried in a litter to the house of his unrelenting father. The

latter, however, would not admit him, but told him from the window that he had determined to bestow his fortune upon the church, and was that day going to a certain rock on the Schneifel to shoot an arrow from it, which would doubtless be carried by the angels of the Lord to whatever religious establishment was most deserving of the gift. Whereupon the young man, struck as if by death itself, desired that he should be carried to the house of his mistress, to take leave of her ; and there he related, with many lamentations the unnatural conduct of his father.

“ ‘ This is no fitting place,’ said she, after his story, ‘ for a young maid to take leave of a monk. Hie thee to the altar of thy convent, and await me there. Take care that thy soul quit not thy body till thou see me ! ’ And straightway she ran to the rock on the Schneifel, and hid herself among the bushes at the bottom ; and when the old man had shot his arrow, sacrilegiously anticipating the messengers of heaven, she picked it up, and ran with it to the altar of the convent, where her lover stood receiving the holy sacrament.

“ ‘ There is thy father’s arrow,’ said she, handing it to him privily through the rails ; ‘ thou hast fulfilled the conditions of the abbot.’ And when the monk produced the arrow, bearing on the point his father’s will describing the gifts—‘ Senarchia, Custia, Hucquentia, et Morcorot, in pago Landunensi et villa Hanapia,’ all present were filled with joy and astonishment.

“ ‘ Who gave thee this, my son ? ’ said the abbot.

“ ‘ An angel ! ’ replied the monk. And so this young man was restored to life, to the world, and to his mistress ; but although the convent enjoyed the bequest a certain time, that the piety of the father might not be unavailing, yet in punishment of the maiden’s sin in acting the part of an angel, and of the abbot’s imprudence in loosening the bonds of the church, it eventually fell into ruin.”

There were some parts of this wild story so singularly applicable to his own case, and the conclusion was in itself so ridiculous, that, for the first time since he had serenaded his mistress in the garden, a smile stole

over the grave and melancholy features of our adventurer. He passed on his way, wondering, almost with awe, at the highness of heart and readiness of hand of that sex which he had imagined, till he knew Ida, to have been intended merely for the plaything of lordly man. Nor was Liese without her share of his peripatetic meditations ;—this noble peasant—this essence and extract of woman, unadulterated by a single one of the thousand artificial compositions that modify the female character.

While admiring the ruins of the chateau of Schœnecken, he saw the inhabitants of the village assembled at the performance of an annual ceremony not a little singular in its simplicity. Two young men were elected for the champions in the peaceful strife ; one to run the distance of a league and back again, while the other, having placed a certain number of eggs at regular distances, carried them all back, one by one, to the starting post. He who finished his task first was the winner, and the victory was celebrated by songs and dances, in which the vanquished party and his adherents partook, as well as the conqueror.

Throughout the whole of the Eifel, indeed, this disposition to make merry was conspicuously manifest. Carl's journey seemed a continual fête. He was no sooner out of one festival than, on arriving at the next village, he found himself in the midst of another. The toothach, the headach, the stomachach, and the thousand other ills that flesh is heir to—all had their particular saints, and each saint his particular day, which must be celebrated by public rejoicings. The people, it is hardly necessary to say, were all poor ; for the rich, when they would be thought to amuse themselves, stew themselves up in scores in an unwholesome room, taking good care to shut the doors fast, that the common people may not see what a set of miserable devils they are in reality. But it is not to the saints alone that the credit belongs of keeping the inhabitants of the Eifel in this enviable condition. The landed inheritance of each family is vested indivisibly in the eldest child, whether male or female ; and the brothers and

sisters remain with the heir in the quality of labourers. The latter, however, are not left entirely to the tender mercies of the other ; for the farm, or *stockhaus*, although it cannot be partitioned, is burthened with certain provisions for the younger children, and is thus mortgaged, as it were, sometimes over head and shoulders.

Passing through the small town of Bitbourg, formerly a Roman station, Carl, after having performed a walk of twenty German leagues, arrived at Trèves, on the Moselle, supposed to be the most ancient city in Europe.

On entering the beautiful valley, in the narrowest part of which Tréves is built, the heart of the wanderer began to beat. He saw before him the Mecca of his pilgrimage ; but, instead of rushing towards it with the ardour of a devotee, his strength failed him for the first time during the journey ; he hung back terrified, and large drops of perspiration broke upon his brow. It was no consideration, however, of personal appearance, that made him pause. He was untouched by the circumstances of his matted locks, which hung in wild confusion from beneath his cap, the gold band of which was blackened with rain, and the black fur turned yellow with dust. Neither did his boots affect him, incrusted though they were with the mud of the Eifel, whitened by the sun ; nor his travel-stained frock, the brown colour of which was emulated by that of his bare neck and breast, once as pure as driven snow. Such things are forgotten by persons of strong feelings, and by almost all persons when placed in trying or extraordinary circumstances. And yet, when about to enter the gates, the evident curiosity with which he was regarded by the passers by, caused him to turn a look of observation upon himself ; and, forgetting Ida for a moment, he felt a pang of shame at the idea of appearing in such costume in the streets of a large and handsome town. He turned away from the walls, determining to return under cover of the approaching night, and, having made such inquiries as were necessary, to seek again whatever shelter his guitar might in the meantime procure for him.

The inhabitants of a distant cottage which he entered, who were principally women, received the minstrel with great demonstrations of joy ; but his proposal to return after visiting the town, which he made when the night began to close definitely in, was listened to with surprise and alarm. He was welcome, said they, to a bed, if he chose to stay ; but not for worlds would they open their door to him again if he once went out. Carl, who had shown himself the most good-natured of singers, persisted somewhat indignantly ; but the only effect which his eloquence produced was to excite the suspicion of the family group, who, after exchanging looks significant at once of terror and determination, informed him, that till this moment they had forgotten the circumstance of the only spare bed in the house being engaged. The minstrel threw his guitar upon his back, and shouldering his little bundle, prepared to quit the inhospitable roof.

"If you be not what they fear you are," said the youngest daughter, gliding after him, and whispering in his ear, "do not venture to leave the town to-night ! You may meet with those on the road with whom a single man will have no chance."

"Do you allude to robbers ? What have I to lose ?"

"They would murder you for your guitar, or for the mere pastime of shedding blood !"

"And is it of such you take me to be ? Do I look like an assassin ? Perhaps you think I am Schinderhannes himself !"

At this redoubted name, which for two years past had kept the banks of the Rhine in terror, from Cologne to the Neckar, a faint shriek escaped from the lips of the girls ; and Benzel, with a look of sorrow and indignation, went out.

Determining at all hazards to enter the town, and take his chance afterwards of a night's lodging, he walked leisurely along, amusing himself with anticipations of the interview with Ida, which perhaps was destined to take place to-morrow. The fears of the cottagers appeared to him to have extended to the whole district ; for although it was yet early in the night, the road was completely deserted, and the houses shut up. He saw

enough, in fact, to convince him, that if he could not find harbour in Tréves there was no chance of it in the neighbourhood ; and having hitherto avoided the great towns, in which he feared that his notes would not be taken in lieu of money, he was somewhat puzzled.

The name of Schinderhannes was one of those sounds with which the timid were scared without knowing why. If a murder was committed, Schinderhannes was the assassin ; if a Jew was roasted at his own fire till he told where his treasures where concealed, Schinderhannes was the cook ; if a pretty girl ran off to the forest to hear a love-tale, the youth it was told by was sure to be Schinderhannes. Carl well remembred that Wolfenstein and he had once proposed to their comrades to set out on a crusade against this famous chief ; and he now called to mind that he touched upon the confines of his peculiar territory. The crimes indeed, imputed truly or falsely to the universal Schinderhannes, filled a large tract of country extending on both sides of the Rhine ; but the district situated between the Moselle and the Nahe, to which Trèves was the key on the north, was supposed to be his principal residence. Musing on such matters Carl arrived at the town, and entered the gates unmolested.

A few of the shops were still open, and our adventurer had no difficulty in inquiring his way to the house of Madame Dallheimer. It was a large and handsome edifice, and, although in the middle of the city, possessed an ample extent of garden ; which Carl found to be the case with many other abodes of the wealthy. This peculiarity made the area of the town appear greatly disproportioned to the number of inhabitants, which scarcely exceeds ten thousand within the ramparts.

The beating of his heart was renewed as he approached the walls. He was perhaps separated only by a few yards from his lost Ida ! In vain, however, he looked for some light in the windows which might indicate the place dedicated to the sleeping apartments, to which he fancied the family must by this time have retired. Nothing was clearly visible except the massive form of the pillars of the portico, and the outline of the roof

sketched upon the sky behind. Carl at length began to think that there was something strange and unusual in the total darkness of so great a building ; and, in sudden alarm, he knew not of what nature, he approached the door, and rung the servants' bell.

The sound swung hollow and heavy within, as if the house was untenanted; and, after waiting an instant, with a more vigorous application of his hand, he sent forth a larum peal that shook the whole house.

"Thou ringest in vain," said a low calm voice behind him. Carl jumped round, and saw the figure of a man, muffled in a dark cloak, standing motionless on the steps. The approach of the stranger had been so noiseless that a momentary sensation of alarm passed across the heart of the wanderer ; but the next moment he stepped quickly up to him, and looked in his face. It was the face of a Jew, and Carl staggered back. Owing to some early impressions, heightened by his late religious bias, there was no animal on the face of the earth so abhorrent to his imagination as a member of that ancient people who were called but not chosen. At the present moment the cry of a raven would have been more welcome to his ear ; and he looked upon the Hebrew face before him, although youthful and handsome in itself, as a sign of the most disastrous omen. He turned his back without replying a word, and grasped the bell again.

"Thou ringest to no purpose," repeated the stranger, "except to rouse the watchers of the night, and get thee into the house of bondage."

"I ask not your counsel, Jew," said Carl haughtily.

"Why not?" demanded the other. "Dost thou fear me?"

"Fear thee ! Son of an accursed race, I only hate and despise thee!"

"That is hard," observed the Jew sarcastically, "thou owest me nothing !" Nevertheless I must do my bidding. If thou art the Christian Benzel, whose baptismal name is Carl, follow me ;" and so saying, he turned suddenly round, and strode away. Carl followed mechanically ; for the Jew spoke as one having authority.

As he walked after his conductor, however, it was not

without some difficulty that his wearied limbs kept pace with his. A doubt crossed his mind, for it would be unfair to call it a fear, of his personal safety. He remembered the warning he had received at the cottage, and the curiosity his appearance had previously excited as he entered the gates ; and in spite of himself the idea of the redoubted Schinderhannes fastened upon his imagination. At any rate, there was no harm, he thought, in being on his guard ; and, securing his bundle and guitar, side by side, upon his shoulder, he carried his sword in his hand, in the manner of a walking-stick, taking care to loosen the blade in the scabbard.

The walk was not a short one. Sometimes our adventurer could have imagined that they had quitted the town altogether, to such an extent did the gardens run in some quarters; but, independently of the real distance, it appeared that his guide sought purposely to make the journey as long as possible, by diving into all manner of intricate lanes and courts. In one of the meanest and most miserable alleys that ever disgraced a city, he at length stopped short, and after listening for some moments, knocked gently at a door. There was no reply for some time, and the stranger did not repeat the knock; but by and by a voice was heard within demanding, in one of those greasy whines that curdle the blood with aversion—

“ Who cometh in the night to the gate of the poor Jew Adonijah ?”

“ Even Ishmael the son of Joab,” was the reply ; and they were immediately admitted.

In the black and dismal apartment into which they were ushered, there were five or six persons, apparently Jews, gathered round thee fire ; to the dying embers of which the room was indebted for the little light it enjoyed. The entrance of the new comers created little stir. There were chairs already placed for them ; and when they sat down the scene relapsed into the same stillness, which it seemed as if their entrance had only disturbed for an instant. The attitudes of the individuals, however, did not convey the idea of rest which the absence of sound and motion usually implies. The men were

dressed in dark cloaks, with hats slouching over their brows, and sat leaning their chins upon a traveller's staff while they pored intently upon the fire. The women were in like manner covered completely from the view : a handkerchief resembling a coarse veil was drawn over their faces ; and a small bundle lay upon their knees. All seemed prepared for a journey; and Carl, in spite of his religious abhorrence, could not refrain from looking with curiosity upon this singular people, who are still in the captivity of the Gentiles, and watch day and night for the coming of their deliverer.

His own situation, however, began speedily to occupy his thoughts. The adventure into which he had fallen was altogether beyond the reach of reasoning. How had his arrival been known in a strange place, into which he had entered but a moment before for the first time in his life ? Of what consequence was he, or his ill-starred name, to any human being, that a man should be appointed to watch for his coming, as if he had been some new Elias ? For what possible purpose had he been trepanned into the society of these wandering Jews ? There could have been no mistake in his identity, for whatever his person might be, his name was by no means common. It was at all events necessary, now that he was here, to demand of his conductor why he had brought him, and what he was expected to do.

" Jew," said he, breaking suddenly the deep silence of the room, " Carl Benzel has followed you at your desire, what would you with him ?"

" Nothing. Has my lord any commands for the servant whom he condescends to hate and despise ?"

" Yes " said Carl sternly ; " I command you to tell me for what purpose you laid in wait for me, and why you have brought me here ?"

" I did simply what I was bidden," replied the Jew ; " and I seek not to pry into the purposes of those whom I serve. Thus much thou mayest learn from my lips. Thou wert beating at the gate of an empty house, and in another moment the city officers would have cast thee into prison, even as a wanderer and a vagabond, with-

out calling, or business, or friend, or kinsman. She whom thou seekest tarried not at Tréves ; for it having been discovered that she endeavoured to send thee tidings of her whereabouts, they carried her on to Mayence by the valley of the Nahe."

"Did you see her, my friend?" asked the lover, with a flush of hope and delight ; "was she well,—in good spirits?"

"I know not the woman," replied the Jew coldly.

"By whom then are you employed?"

"By my master. Ere yet the cock croweth, it is our purpose to go forth, that we may cross the Hohe-Wald when the sun is high, and reach our destination in the valley of the Nahe before the shadows of the night begin to fall. If thou wilt journey with us, there will be mutual protection in our numbers ; for in these last days there are evil men upon the earth, who walk to and fro upon the hills like unto strong lions."

"What assurance can I have that you mean me no foul play?"

"Thy poverty ought to be sufficient ; but, moreover, Christian though thou be, we will break bread with thee, and drink of the cup of peace."

"Then I consent," said Carl, who would have been satisfied with a pledge still less substantial. A candle was then lighted, and a cloth laid upon the table, when, to the surprise of the guest, who expected to sup upon black bread and a draught of water, a large loaf was set down as white as snow, together with a cold fowl, and a stone bottle of wine from the banks of the Main, worth its weight in gold.

The men ate and drank heartily, although without much speaking ; but the women did not draw near the table at all, but "brake bread" where they sat, without raising their veils. Carl, who had now an opportunity of observing his companions for the first time, was greatly struck with the contrast exhibited in the physiognomies of Adonijah, the aged master of the house, and Ishmael, his young conductor. In that of the former, all the meanness, and cunning, and treachery attributed to the Jewish character were conspicuous ;

while the face of the latter, which in a woman would have been called perfectly beautiful, expressed a lostness of mind and a manly sincerity, that, to the prejudiced eyes of our adventurer, were hardly compatible with the oriental cast of the features. On his part, Ishmael, after he had looked for some moments at Carl Benzel, appeared to have made a discovery equally pleasing ; but at length his eyes fell beneath those of the Christian ; they rested for a moment upon the face of Adonijah, then wandered rapidly round the apartment, and drawing his cloak more closely round him, he leant back in his chair with a sigh, which seemed to say, "I am of the blood of a degraded people !"

"Thou hast a guitar at thy shoulder," said one of the women, who spoke for the first time, "sing us a song, young stranger, even a new song, that our hearts may be glad within us."

Carl hesitated for a moment; he had never before exercised his art for the delectation of this unbelieving race ; but reflecting that he had eaten and drank at their cost, he could not refuse the only payment it was in his power to give.

As he swept the chords of the instrument with an uncertain hand, he looked at Ishmael, and drew unconsciously as he looked, from the strings that trembled to his touch, a wild and melancholy sound.

"I will sing thee an *old* song," said he suddenly, and falling into the oriental form of expression, "Listen, children of the captivity, to a song of Zion !

"By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down ; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.

"We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

"For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song ; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land ?

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

"If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave

to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.' ”

The women had raised their veils, and put back their caps from their ears to listen more intently ; and as the strain went on, large bright drops rolled down their faces, and they kept time by waving their hands to and fro before them, as if representing the action of beating their breasts. The minstrel paused, and looked round, half in minstrel pride, half in curiosity ; but before he could resume, the Song of the Captivity was taken up by Ishmael, in a low, deep voice, breathing the earnestness and enthusiasm of passion :

“ ‘ Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem ; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

“ ‘ O daughter of Babylon who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

“ ‘ Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones ! ’ ”

The whole atmosphere seemed to vibrate sensibly with the power of a voice that was scarcely heard louder than a whisper. The eye of the singer blazed ; his cheek flushed ; his bosom heaved convulsively ; and as he concluded, his hand clutched, as if by an unconscious motion, the handle of a long knife that appeared, for the first time, beneath his cloak.

At this moment, a sound of sobbing was heard from a corner of the room where one of the women sat apart ; and Ishmael, starting from his trance, flew towards the mourner, and stealing his arm round her waist, appeared to whisper some words of consolation or assurance in her ear. She wept, however, for some time “ as one who would not be comforted,” but at length, ceasing suddenly at something he said, she turned round to look in his face, and in the action the veil fell from her head.

Carl saw with surprise that she was not “ a daughter of their people.” She was a young creature, apparently under sixteen, delicately fair and exquisitely beautiful ; and when, after gazing for a moment, she rested her head confidingly upon her supporter’s shoulder, the

mingled expression of meekness, helplessness, and woman's devotion, that sat like moonlight upon her face, brought the tears into his eyes. Adonijah looked upon the scene with a peculiar malignity of expression ; and the young Jewess who had requested the song, and who seemed to be his grand-daughter, turned away her head. Carl could see her clenched hand tremble with emotion, as it touched without resting on her knee.

Reflecting at length, that, in his present state of exhaustion, arising from fatigue both of body and mind, he should prove but a sorry escort in a journey which seemed to promise danger, our adventurer signified his wish to lie down to rest, if not to sleep, till he should be called upon to depart. This was thought nothing more than reasonable ; and unnoticed by the two lovers—for such they seemed—who were now too much engaged with each other to observe what was passing, he retired into the next apartment, and stretched himself upon a mattress that lay invitingly upon the carpetless floor.

His eyes were closing, his thoughts wandering, and the clouds of slumber descending upon his brain, when suddenly he was aroused by a light tread at a few paces distance, and looking up he saw the Gentile girl, followed by Ishmael the Jew, pass across the room towards a door in the farther end.

"I will call thee," said the latter, "when it is time, and in the meantime sleep, for the sake of mercy, as soon as thou canst, for I dread the effect of this journey on so fragile and beautiful a frame!"

"How can I sleep, O Ishmael?" she replied in a tremulous voice ; I already feel as if I were asleep, and walking in some terrible dream. Strange things and strange forms are around me ; I am hurried into circumstances of which I know not the nature, nor the beginning, nor the end ; and he who swore to love and cherish me, and divide with me his house and home, his heart and soul, and the inmost thoughts of his mind—his lips are silent, and his brow cold and dark?"

"If thou knewest my heart," said Ishmael, in strong agitation, "thou wouldest not torture me thus!"

"Let me know it then ! I have shown you mine to

the very bottom. I have forsaken all for you—home, family, friends, country, religion. I have addressed you in the words and in the spirit of your own Ruth, ‘ whither thou goest I will go ; and where thou lodgest I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried ; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me ! ’ ”

“ Light of mine eyes ! ” exclaimed Ishmael clasping her in his arms : “ thou hast so spoken ; thou hast so done. Like the gentle Moabitess herself thou hast left thy kinsfolk behind, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. Thou hast loaded me with the gifts of thy love, which are more precious than the gold of Ophir ; and what man can give in return, that will I give, to the last drop of blood in my veins ! ”

“ I demand not blood ; the very name makes me shiver, and the sight of yours would kill me. Give me your confidence ; I have a right to ask it. Whither go we ? Why tarried we so long for the young minstrel, whose delicate white hand seems better acquainted with the harp than with the sword ? On what errand so momentous and rapid are we sped, that to perform it we must cross the wildest tract of the country, where no name of power is heard save that of the demon Schinderhannes ? ”

“ He will not harm us,” said Ishmael, quickly.

“ How are you assured of this ? ”

“ Because he dares not.”

“ Why dares he not ? ”

“ Because—”

“ Say on ! Entire confidence or nothing ! ”

“ Because—” and after an internal struggle that blanched his cheek with the whiteness of death, he placed his lips to her ear. A stir took place, the nature of which Carl could not at once distinguish by the puny light of their taper ; but in another instant he saw that the young woman had fainted. As Ishmael carried her silently into the inner room, the folds of a species of coarse drapery that covered the part of the

wall near which they had stood, opened suddenly and a head was thrust through. He recognized the features of the grand-daughter of Adonijah, who looked after the lovers with a glance that made him shudder. The next moment the light disappeared.

Even this adventure, interesting as he thought it at the time, did not long banish sleep from the over wearied eyes of Carl Benzel.

When he was called by the young Jew, he found the travellers, consisting of Adonijah, and his grand-daughter Leah, Ishmael, and the Gentile girl, Magdalene, together with five others of the house of Israel, prepared to go forth.

It was not yet daylight, but on a passport being presented by Adonijah, the gates were opened to them ; and leaving the city of Tréves behind, the little party directed their steps towards the dreary and savage heights of the Hohe-Wald.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXODUS INTO THE WILDERNESS.

The passage over the Hohe-Wald was more tedious than the Jews had expected. Long after the sun had risen, it was still night upon the earth ; the day broke, as it were, behind the scene, and the travellers continued to walk on in darkness. By the colour of the mist alone could they perceive that the dawn was come ; and even when at length they were able to catch some fitful glimpses of the sky, the prospect was but little mended. There were no clouds, or rather all was cloud. The whole expanse of the firmament was packed, as it were, with masses of vapour of the same dark leaden hue, the grotesque forms of which could with difficulty be distinguished one from the other. In the east an immense globe, several times larger than the ordinary disk of the

sun, and as red as blood, hung low in the heavens. It exerted no particular power even in its own immediate vicinity, but looked with the same deep, dull, baleful glare upon the whole scene.

Nothing could be more dreary than the road pursued by the travellers. It lay through a succession of vast forests that crowned the steeps of the mountain, and in many places, even in ordinary weather, must have been shut in from the beams of the sun. The sides of the ravine were clothed with the same unvarying drapery, from the line of the visible horizon down to the torrent at the bottom, which it concealed ; and if at times a bare rock protruded threateningly in the midst, or the foam of the waters below was seen gleaming through the misty trees, the occurrence was hailed by the eye as a relief.

In the mean time the mist had not wholly dispersed. As they neared the summit of the pass, a sudden gust of wind would sometimes whirl it away, but returning the next moment, like a determined foe, it encompassed them with a phalanx still more formidable. By degrees, however, its force appeared to be exhausted. Fiercer and more frequent came the triumphant winds, and at length the blast swept wildly and alone over the plateau of the mountain. The sea of vapour that rolled and tumbled in the ravine began gradually to disappear. Sometimes a large mass was detached, and, floating slowly upwards, was caught in the eddy of the winds near the top, and rent into fragments, and so vanished ; but in general the whole body sunk slowly, like a lake swallowed up in the sands. A hundred islands reared their wooded heads in the waste ; and as the tops of the trees first rose above the unstable surface, the Israelites were reminded of the time when the dove of Noah was able to pluck off an olive branch amidst the wilderness of waters.

When its task was at length accomplished, the wind itself died away with a wailing sound ; some heavy drops of rain fell vertically upon the earth, and splashing through the leaves and branches of the forest, filled the air with a dreary monotone. Even the fiery sun was

extinguished in the heavens, and the clouds began to move, and rend, and blacken.

The calm below was not of long duration. The great round drops of rain were shattered suddenly in the faces of the party, each fragment feeling as cold and sharp as a dagger. A universal roar ran through the recesses of the Wald, and was echoed in thunder from cliff to cliff; the mightiest trees bent and shivered like so many willows; and at length as a stream of fire descended, not a hundred yards from the travellers, and smote a magnificent oak to its centre, all stood still aghast.

"God of Abraham!" cried old Adonijah, "what will become of me?"

"Closer, love—closer, my own Magdalene," whispered Ishmael, "so that one blow may destroy us both!"

The women prayed silently; while Carl Benzel ran on before to a bend in the road, to look if there was no place of shelter in sight. He was speedily seen by the rest of the party waving his hat for them to come on; and having eagerly obeyed, all ran towards a little hut which he pointed out by the way-side, and crowded in.

It was one of those small chapels, or rather oratories, that in Catholic countries are placed in such situations for the use of pious travellers. In general the Virgin Mary is the presiding deity; but here a wooden statue of our Saviour, as large as life, looked down from the blood-stained cross upon the group. The Jews looked at the image with a natural horror: they felt as if they were intruders, and would probably have retired, had not the raving of the blast without fallen still more wildly upon their ear. As it was, they kept away, as far as the narrow area permitted, from what, in such a place and at such a time, must have been an object of awe.

Carl, moving neither cap nor knee, stood opposite the crucifix, gazing on the ghastly face with a look of grave and solemn interest. More he would have deemed unbecoming a man whose family had long abjured the damnable errors of image-worship; yet the pres-

ence of the Jews seemed to annoy him ; and turning away from the mean and knavish face of Adonijah, the expression of which, touched by the sublimity of the storm, had acquired a character of atrocity, he sought the eyes of Ishmael, curious to observe with what feelings he regarded the spectacle.

Ishmael did not look towards the crucifix at all. His eyes were fixed upon those of Magdalene, who stood gazing wildly upon the symbol of her deserted faith.

" It is but an image," said he, " of man's workmanship ; look at *me*, Magdalene—or at the storm—or at the heavens!"

" See—see !" she exclaimed, pointing with a bewildered expression to the figure.

" Magdalene !" and he endeavoured with gentle force to draw her away.

" Hush ! hush ! Hark ! the lips open—oh !" and she hid her face in her hands, and would have sunk upon the ground had not her lover supported her.

" This is frenzy," said he : " these lips cannot move, neither can a voice come forth from the workmanship of man.

" Ishmael," said Magdalene, with a calmness that startled him, " you are a Hebrew ; and you cannot hear the words of the Saviour, neither you nor your people. But I, who have been baptized in his name, my ears are open, though my heart is shut. These lips *did* unclose, and that mouth *did* speak. It said ——" and stopping short, she pressed her hand wildly upon her brow.

" What were the words of its voice ?" asked Ishmael in a whisper ; for a superstitious terror seemed to have taken hold of him. She clasped her hands round his neck, and drawing his head down to hers, put her lips to his ear.

" These !" said she: " ' Liar, hypocrite, adulteress, apostate—traitress to thy family, thy country, and thy God!—perish in thy sin !'"

Then casting him away with almost miraculous force, she sunk down before the image, not daring to raise her

eyes beyond the bleeding feet, and with a low, broken moan, fell prone upon her face.

Carl watched this scene with intense interest; and when Ishmael would have gone to raise his mistress, he seized him by the shoulder with a gripe which the Jew in vain endeavoured to resist.

"Let her alone," said he sternly; "she may worship the Saviour erroneously, but that is better than to reject and deny him altogether."

The storm at length so far abated in violence, that the travellers were able to resume their journey; but the detention they had suffered, ever since setting out, by the state of the weather, rendered it late in the evening before they were completely clear of the Hohe-Wald. Even after they had descended to the common level of the earth, the surface was so much broken by heights and hollows, and woods and morasses, that little benefit appeared to have accrued from the change; and when at length they entered a forest, where the twilight was converted into almost total darkness, they began to fear that it would be necessary to pass the night upon the spot.

Their case was the more desperate as the strength of some of the women had begun to fail; and Magdalene, more especially, could only get forward by means of the joint support of Ishmael and Carl Benzel. The old Jew Adonijah had long since been obliged to lean upon two of his people, passing his arms round their necks; while Leah in the rear, left to the exertion of her own energies, followed the steps of the former trio like fate.

At this moment a light gleamed suddenly in the distance, and as suddenly disappeared. Most of the Jews hailed the signal with delight, likening it to the pillar of fire that led their fathers in safety through the wilderness. Carl, remarked, however, that it did not seem as if it had proceeded from the window of a house, and that its disappearance was too instantaneous to be referred to the intervention of any object on the road. Ishmael and Adonijah alone were silent. The former of the two last became gloomy and abstracted; he did not reply either in sympathy or encouragement, as he was wont,

to the moans that sometimes escaped his mistress ; but on the contrary, appeared at times to forget that she was leaning on his arm.

Proceeding a little further, the cry of an owl was heard in the thicket ; and Ishmael, whose nervous sensibilities appeared to have been excited by the events of the journey, started so violently as to draw a faint scream from Magdalene. In another minute the long shrill “whoo !” was answered from the trees on the opposite side of the road.

“ My God, what is that ? ” cried Magdalene, starting in her turn.

“ An owl,” replied Benzel ; and mocking the cry, with a happiness of imitation that was peculiar to him, he emitted a “ too-whoo ! ” so loud and clear that the whole forest rang with it. Scarcely had its echoes died away when at least a score of the same owlish voices, some near, some further off, and some scarcely audible in the distance, took up the strain ; and Carl, partly to amuse the fears of Magdalene, and partly in remembrance of his boyish feats of the same kind, was about to repeat the successful experiment.

“ Silence ! ” cried Ishmael, fiercely.

“ What is it ? ” said Magdalene, in breathless terror.

“ I will go and see,” replied her lover ; and without another word he darted into the thicket, and disappeared.

“ I will follow him,” said Magdalene, faintly.

“ No, no, let us wait. What frenzy can have seized the Jew ? —but he will return presently ; let us wait.”

“ I will follow him,” repeated she ; I *must* follow him, and alone. Lead me to the side of the road, for my eyes are dim, and I cannot see it.”

“ You follow him ! why this is worse frenzy still ! I will cry ‘ whoo ’ again, as if a whole legion of owls were in my throat, and, since he is attracted by such music, we shall have him back on the instant.”

“ Oh, hush, for mercy’s sake ! ” cried Magdalene, covering his mouth suddenly with her hand, “ these are no owls, but vultures ! ”

Carl—startled suddenly into a consciousness of their situation, but unwilling to attribute the conduct of this strange Ishmael to a complicity with the robbers, if robbers they were—hurried the trembling and weeping girl towards a quarter from which there had been no reply to his call, and forsaking the road, entered the forest.

“To follow him in utter darkness,” said he, as he almost carried her along, “would be fruitless toil ; and to remain on the highway would be to deliver ourselves up voluntarily to the danger you apprehend. Whatever may be the motive of Ishmael’s rashness, if he escape the fate which it would seem to merit, he will think himself all the more fortunate for finding his mistress in safety.” Magdalene resisted for a moment, but at last yielded with a heavy sigh.

“My appearance,” said she, speaking in the tone of soliloquy, “would be his death-warrant!—O God deliver him!”

The call, of whatever nature it might be, whether of men or birds, was occasionally heard long after the two wanderers had left the road ; but by degrees the sound became more distant, and Carl had the satisfaction of finding that they were actually receding from their supposed enemies. His situation, notwithstanding, was by no means void of danger ; and of the two kinds, he began speedily to inquire whether the one they had just escaped was not the slighter. The forests in this part of the country, he knew, were sometimes many leagues in extent, and he was well aware that neither his companion nor himself, in their present state of exhaustion, and on a route so tangled and interrupted by trees, had the least chance of being able to walk a mile. As their pace slackened, partly from weariness, and partly from the obstructions of the road, the temperature of their heated blood cooled suddenly ; and a sensation of extreme cold, attended by shivering and stiffness of the limbs, informed them that their journey was drawing to a close, whether premature or otherwise. To lie down in the funereal shade of that leafy canopy which, even in the day time must have excluded the light and warmth of the sun, would be like stretching themselves in a

grave ; and there was little chance of their encountering even a woodman's hut in a place where there seemed, as far as their observation could extend in the darkness visible, to be not a single vestige of the work of the hatchet.

Carl, however, endeavoured, as well as possible, to keep up the spirits of his companion ; but although his remarks were assented to, sometimes by a sound half moan half murmur, and sometimes, when her strength failed to produce even this, by a feeble pressure of the arm, he soon found that these were only the answers of an automaton worked by the machinery of habit, and that her soul was unconscious of the import of his words. It seemed probable, indeed, that she was not even aware of her actual situation, but that the sense of pain, and cold, and fatigue, was dead in her limbs, and the feelings of the body absorbed in those of the mind. This mental suffering, however, when indicated by such phenomena, is less acute than is generally imagined. It is like a dream in which half the terror is made up by its indistinctness, and half the pain produced by the inability of the mind to fix upon and grapple with the cause of its suffering. Were this not the case, were there not a merciful limit affixed in most constitutions, beyond which the soul cannot suffer, calamities afflicting the mind would kill oftener than they do. As it is, even suicide, the last resource of misfortune, is perhaps caused more by a confused and almost unconscious desire of relief, than by any intensity of agony ; and if so, the verdict of the English coroner is strictly philosophical,—“ temporary insanity.” As for poor Magdalene, she sometimes started and looked up in her companion's face, as if doubting his identity ; and once clinging to him with both arms, she cried in the voice of one who dreams—

“ Ay—to the guillotine ! Go on, for I will follow thee !”

It was probably owing to this indistinctness in her perceptions that she held out so long. Had her sufferings been less, they would have been fatal. As it was, Carl was amazed at the strength and apparent fortitude of this poor young creature, whose delicate form resembled

one of those phantoms of the poet, which he calls up simultaneously with green and sloping banks, and sunny skies, and gentle winds perfumed by the first faint incense of summer. He was amazed at her ; and, if the truth must be told, somewhat ashamed of himself—for already his limbs began to fail, his breath to become languid, and yet pantingly, and he felt a conviction gathering upon his mind that very soon he should be able to go no further.

This is the precise moment when, in the eventful journey of life, relief usually presents itself, and the traveller arrives at the “turning” in the “long lane” alluded to in the proverb. We are never picked up at sea, adrift in the long boat, till just on the eve of perishing ; there is not a poor devil in the streets of London who ever wins, or steals, or finds a shilling till his last is spent ; and no one who has lost his way in a wood need hope to reach the borders as long as he can drag one leg after the other.

Carl Benzel had arrived exactly at this point. Magdalene was continuing to get on, as feebly but as unfailingly as ever ; and her supporter, on whom she leaned with no more mercy than if he had been a crutch, after attempting to calculate, in some discontent, the specific gravity of a sylph, slackened his pace gradually, and at length stood still, leaning his back against a tree.

“ Let us sit down ; I cannot walk another step,” he was just about to falter, when luckily for the pride of manhood, a steady light appeared in front, at not more than a hundred yards distant ; and with a strong catching of the breath, he contrived to substitute—

“ Cheer up, my brave girl ! we are at our journey’s end. Let it be a den of robbers,” continued he to himself as he bore her forward with renewed strength ; “ what have I to fear, who have nothing to lose, except a life that can be of no consequence to them ? My liberty, indeed, which is still more precious, they might deprive me of ; but for what purpose. Why put themselves to the trouble of providing lodging and sustenance for a homeless wanderer, who has no means of repaying their hospitality either with vengeance or reward ? ” He

at length reasoned himself into the conviction that he had acted a very foolish part in making so painful an escape from imaginary danger ; and when they emerged from the black shadow of the trees, and reached a solitary house which stood by the side of a road skirting the forest, he prepared to demand admittance with the freedom of one of those lucky fellows who know that their property is beyond the reach of robbery, and their life secure in its insignificance from murder.

His anticipations of welcome, however, were a little cooled when he saw, by a sign-board swinging above his head, that the house was an inn. Your "jolly host," he knew, is only jolly in certain company ; he is too anxious about the respectability of his establishment to be fond of harbouring vagrants ; and he gets too much music gratis from his guests to care a great deal about it.

"We must try, however," said he with a sigh. "Your Jewish dress, Magdalene, will suffice to keep Christians at a distance ; but draw down the veil closer, for your beauty, I fancy, is the only property we have between us that can attract cupidity."

"It would be uncommon ;" continued he, hesitating, as they reached the door ; "the accident, I allow, would be altogether uncommon ; but if you so happen to have a little money about you."

Without a word of reply, Magdalene put into his hand a purse heavy with gold.

"Hollo ! house ! house !" cried Carl Benzel, thundering with hand and foot at the door. "Open, mine host of the Fig Tree, for here are two travellers whom heaven has sent you."

The adjuration was no sooner pronounced, than the door sprang to the wall, like the gate of the Forty Thieves at the words, "Open Sessame !" and a landlord, as jolly as a round belly and an eye twinkling with humour could make him, presented his face.

"Open indeed !" cried he, "my handsome cavalier, with his pretty little bundle of contraband goods from the banks of the Jordan. Who would not open so late in the evening, and at the tail of such a storm—and a

bottle of right Rhenish simmering in the pan, and a glass of Kirschenwasser ready filled, as if by absolute inspiration! Enter, enter, my gallant traveller; and, if you find a better supper and a softer bed between the Rhine and the sea, never trust again to the word of Kunz Weiner."

They were speedily seated by a fire glowing with all the rosy good-humour that lit up the face of mine host; and Carl, while preparations were making for supper, threw around him a look of languid curiosity.

The first thing that struck him was the extreme strength of the windows. Its numerous panes of glass were singularly small, and the wooden bars between so thick as to give the apartment a dungeon-like appearance, that must have been still more apparent in the day-time. It seemed also as if the curtains (not a usual appendage at all in an inn of this class) were drawn with more than common precision; a view of one of the windows being afforded only by the drapery being caught accidentally by the host's foot as he passed, who immediately stopped to adjust it with a care that seemed superfluous. This awakened at once the drowsy attention of our adventurer; and when, the next moment, he saw an immense head raised above the horizon of the opposite table, behind which its wearer appeared to be stretched upon a bench, he started almost in alarm.

The matted locks of this apparition, thick, black, and greasy, hung over his low brow and sunken eyes; while huge whiskers to correspond, and a hideous beard, at least a foot in length, completed the framework of a face, of which the heavy, lumpish features conveyed an idea of brutality, unredeemed by a single ray of intelligence. Carl's heart sickened beneath the dull, sullen glare with which the stranger looked at him for more than a minute, and he felt a sensation of relief when the meaningless orbs sunk slowly into their sockets, and the shaggy head disappeared behind the table, resuming its recumbent position, with a sound, half growl half groan. Kunz Weiner appeared to notice the expression of his guest's countenance, and to be vexed that the hilarity,

which it was his business to promote, should be disturbed by such a circumstance.

"Dull beast," grumbled he to himself, "now will he wallow here till day-break, if his neighbours do not come to fetch him with a hand-barrow. By this cup of Rhenish—hot, spiced, and creaming for very richness,—he is not worth the Kirschenwasser that turns him from a man into a hog!"

"You lie, Kunz!" cried the object of this soliloquy, in a voice which mingled the croak of the raven with the grunt of the animal, to which he had been likened; "you know you lie, you walking wine-skin! for I am never sleepy and stupid but when athirst. Had I but as much spirit in me now as dwells in the cup of Rhenish you brag of, by the Three Kings of Cologne, I would tap that portly barrel of yours with my dagger!"

"To bed, Peter!" said the host, losing temper, yet lowering his voice; "to bed, Peter Schwarz, or you know what must happen!"

"To bed! Thunder and devils! why to bed before I have done my work? Answer me that, you lying knave. Come, come, let us have no more slumbering. What is it to be, for I am ready. Here you have kept me beastly sober for at least twelve hours at a stretch, and I'd as lief be a toad pent up in a rock of the Hohe-Wald!"

"There, there, in God's name!" said the host hurriedly, and in apparent alarm, "there is drink," and he poured nearly a quart of ardent spirits into an earthen jug. "Go, drink, and be drunk—go, roll and wallow—go to the devil if you will, so that you leave the room!"

Peter Schwarz—or, when done into English, Peter the Black—straightway gathered himself up from the bench, and displaying a tall, ill-shaped, ungainly figure, shambled round the table, and clutching the jug, was about to raise it to his lips.

"Not, here, you unmannerly knave," cried Kunz Weiner. "To your sty, sir! from which you budge not, if there be virtue in lock and key, till your friends

come to take charge of you." Peter wheeled slowly about without a word, and walked away, with the half fierce, half sullen air of a bullock ; but when he reached the door—

"I owe you a turn for this, master tapster," said he, twisting his head round his shoulder, and fixing his meaningless eyes upon mine host ; "only wait till I be drunk enough!" and he went out followed cautiously by his gaoler.

"Let us fly," said Magdalene, starting up from her stupefaction—"It will be impossible for them to find us in the dark."

"The door is bolted and locked," replied Carl, calmly, "and the key at the girdle of the landlord. Draw your veil still closer ; lean your head upon the table, and affect to sleep. If our suspicions turn out to be correct, which I shall presently ascertain, it will be time enough to turn to bay. Peter Schwarz is by this time in safe durance ; the landlord will be alone with us in the room ; and him I could slay as easily and suddenly as a fatted calf."

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD ADAGE OF THE FRYING-PAN AND THE FIRE.

When Kunz Weiber returned to his guests, every trace of discontent had vanished from his smooth brow and laughter-loving eyes.

"That dose," said he, "will set him to sleep for twelve hours, and then he will be a new man. Our friend Peter is a very good child, but he has this oddity, that whenever taken in his cups, he imagines himself to be deadly sober. And now to our own affairs. By what road, in the name of all the saints, did you travel through the storm that some hours ago shook the whole country ?"

"We are from Treves, by the Hohe-Wald." Kunz started, and looked strangely at the guest, examining him from head to foot with his eye.

"And how did you get here?" said he, in a tone of strong curiosity.

"We crossed the forest."

"Oho! Is it so?" and the quick glance of Carl Benzel detected his fingers at work in some masonic signal.

"Come," said the traveller, "let us waste no more time. Are not you Kunz Weiner, of the Fig Tree?"

"Were there any birds stirring?" asked the cautious host.

"Plenty of owls."

"Did you meet any friends on the road?"

"No; I was on special business."

"Where, if I may be so bold?"

"At the next mill."^{*}

"Oho! Is it so?" said Kunz Weiner again, and peering round his back, he discovered the guitar—"What, you are on a visit to old Moritz?"

Carl nodded.

"I see, I see. He loves a good song with all his heart, and a glass too, for that matter, bumper high. Poor old Moritz! there is no man I would sooner do business with in all the valley. But I wonder they never told me a word about the minstrel—ha! ha! it is a capital joke. Zounds!" he continued in a whisper, "how came they to order me to provide one of those noisy rams[†], if they had already engaged more Christian-like music?"

"You forget, my friend," replied Carl, whispering also, and pointing warningly to Magdalene, "that there is no answering for the course of events; the ram may

* The mills, on account of their solitary situation, and the repeated wealth of the millers, were the frequent objects of attack; and for the same reason were so well fortified that they formed a favourite place of refuge for suspicious travellers.

† A long and heavy piece of wood which is used for battering down doors.

have its turn for aught I know, and the solo be changed into a duet."

" Ha ! ha ! you are a wag. But why the murrain were you so reserved ? Did you doubt the old *kochermann*?* Did you think you had to do with a *schleichener*?†

" No, no ; but I am a young hand, and we cannot be too cautious. In the meantime I want you to lend me a horse, and show me the way."

" What ! Do you not know the *kochemeresink*?‡ But I forgot: these will be unnecessary in this case, the house being so well known; and at all events, you, I take it, are the first."

" Whether first or last, I tell you, I am but a young hand, and of course afraid of failure in my mission. To avoid that, the best way is to set out betimes ; and so I pray you, Kunz Weiner, speed me my errand, and let me begone."

" Presently; presently," replied Kunz ; " but I want to ask you a question," and he drew him still farther away from Magdalene, and put his lips to his ear.

" Pray," said he, " do you know who the two travellers are who came to my house this evening, and are now in bed, and asleep ?"

" No ; how should I ?"

" You might have heard who were expected ; and for my part, I would give my ears to know. They are a cavalier and a young lady, I think the handsomest couple I ever saw in my life ; and they rode up to the door so gallantly, and called out so proudly, that my heart warmed to them the moment I set eyes upon them. If you are to lose purse or life, said I to myself, under the roof of Kunz Weiner, I pledge myself solemnly that it shall be taken in a friendly and agreeable manner.

" Can I see them ?" said Carl, whose interest was powerfully awakened.

* The keeper of one of those houses, generally inns, which served for the rendezvous or refuge of the robbers.

† A traitor.

‡ The marks made on the road by the advanced guard of the robbers to indicate the way to the rest.

"Have I not told you that they are in bed, and asleep ; aye, and their doors and windows bolted as fast as iron can do it ? Ah, you young rogue, you know more than you pretend ; but don't think to come over the old kochemermann. See them ! Were they in the centre of the earth you should have a peep. Come along."

"Have you any precise orders respecting them ?"

"Alas, yes, their protection is signed by Schinderhan-nes himself!" At this intelligence, Carl repented of his curiosity, and urged his host to make haste.

"No hurry," said the latter ; "old Moritz is over his first cup yet, and in a little while some of our comrades will be here to drink success to your music. But had you seen this couple whom you are now going to see ! The wife drawing off her husband's boots, and smoothing his disordered locks, and then kissing him on the brow, like a child." The tears came into the good-natured Kunz's eyes : "By the holy Mary," continued he, "whatever my orders had been, rather than let such a savage as Peter Schwarz lay a finger on her, I would have drugged her posset myself, and set her in so sweet a sleep, that when awaking in paradise the next morning, she would have rubbed her eyes, and cried, 'Hollo, my merry host, my jolly, kind old lad of the Fig Tree, what is it o'clock ?'"

By this time they had ascended a steep stair, with the aid of a lantern, and Kunz pointed to a door in the corridor, and placed his finger on his lips. He began to climb the next flight however, having first put off his shoes, and Carl following his example, they speedily found themselves in a large garret. Here the host, sinking noiselessly upon his knees, put his ear to the floor to listen ; and then raised, slowly and cautiously, a trap-door, and beckoned to Carl to advance.

When the latter looked down, he was startled to see within a few feet of his eyes, two persons lying fast asleep in the bed. The face of the male traveller was altogether hidden by the position of the counterpane ; and that of the female too was, for a time, concealed by her arm, the exquisite symmetry of which was not the

less remarkable, that the colour exhibited little of the delicacy which betokens luxurious nurture. Carl gazed with growing interest. The minutes were flying; the banditti were expected every instant; he had already satisfied the host—and yet he hung there, fascinated as if by a spell, his eyes riveted on the fair head below, the redundant tresses of which having escaped from the cap, overflowed half the bed.

“Enough,” whispered Kunz.

“I will not stir till I see her face.” The host flashed the light of the lantern on the lady’s head. She moved her arm, sighed heavily, turned—it was Liese!

“Holy God!” cried Carl aloud, in the surprise of the moment. He had just time to see the male traveller grasp instantaneously a pistol which lay on a table beside the bed, when the light was withdrawn, and he felt himself dragged from the opening by Kunz Weiner, who let down the trap-door as noiselessly as he had raised it.

“And is this the way you return my kindness?” said the host indignantly, and yet with a sort of humour, when they had descended to the parlour, “by frightening my guests out of their night’s sleep, so that, in the morning, I shall have to swear myself black in the face that it was only a dream.”

“My dear Kunz, I could not help it. I know the young lady, and she is indeed a charming girl—but would that I had seen the man’s face? Who can he be?”

“That is just what I want to know. ‘Who can he be?’ said I, the moment I set eyes on him—‘if we are to make the *masematten** at all with so handsome a cavalier, it would give me pain to think that he should go further, where he would be sure to fare worse.’”

“But have you no guess?”

“Why, yes:—he must be either a man of fortune, who has paid handsomely for his passport, or a friend of our

* Affairs of commerce,—the business, so typified, which the robbers were invited to come to arrange, when summoned to a rendezvous.

Schinderhannes—perhaps from Holland or Belgium—who travels incog., in order to study more closely the manners and customs, force, policy and institutions of the bold foresters of the Rhine.” The latter surmise determined Carl, who had begun to think of claiming once more the patronage of Liese, to leave the house instantly, and trust to his own boldness and ingenuity. He had some notion, at the same time, it must be confessed, that he was entitled to the assistance of Providence, in as much as he was the human instrument of redeeming a Christian maid from her liaison with a Jew.

It is said that tortured criminals have been known to sleep upon the rack ; a fact which we cannot doubt, since Magdalene was found in a deep slumber, in the precise position which Carl recommended her to assume for the purpose of concealing her terror from Kunz Weiner. As soon as the horse was at the door, mine host was about to awaken her unceremoniously; but her friend, desiring him to forbear, lifted her in his arms himself from her chair, and placed her still asleep upon a pillion which was fixed behind the saddle. In this position the humane and good-natured landlord of the Fig Tree held her till the minstrel had mounted ; who then, drawing the damsel’s hands round his waist, and laying her head upon his shoulder, shook heartily the moist paw of his friend Kunz.

“ I hope I am right,” said the latter, hesitating for a moment before he gave up the bridle finally into the hands of the traveller ; “ I wish I had dared to awake him, that you might have seen his face ! To recognize the lady is nothing ; you might have known her by chance, but—no’ matter. Good night.”

“ Good night, good night,”—and our adventurer rode off at a leisurely trot.

Having proceeded at this pace far enough to be sure that a change would not be detected by the ears of Kunz Weiner—in whose eyes, when standing at the door, he had perceived a shade of doubt, or perhaps merely of sorrow at parting with his steed—Carl, for fault of whip and spur, began to belabour the animal with his sheathed sword ; appealing at the same time to his horsely pride

by those praises that are paid in advance on expected deservings. All, however, was in vain. Less good-humoured than his owner, and less sullenly tractable than Peter the Black, the insensible beast shook his ears at the flattery, emitted a groan of endurance at the stripes, and continued his jog trot.

Oh! the pain of such a flight, with darkness about your path, and murder at your heels ! It is a walking nightmare ; in which, conscious of your danger, and aware of the means of escape, you are compelled by some odd, and yet terrible fatality, to crawl instead of run. Carl imagined that he heard the sound of voices, nay the tread of feet, behind him. The impression at one time was so strong, that he drew his sword, and endeavoured to wheel round his charger in order to meet his pursuers face to face; but this cold-hearted animal only emitted a contemptuous snort at his fears.

"There is no stable door in the hedge," reasoned the Houyhnhnm ;—"and no neighbour passing for my rider to converse with. Why should I halt ? Whr-r-ff!" and he continued his jog-trot as before.

Had Carl had time to philosophise, he would doubtless have bestowed at least an apostrophe on the inconvenience of having money in one's pocket. He would have remembered the courageous feelings of independence with which he had approached the door of the Fig Tree, while reflecting that he was without a dollar in the world ; and contrasted them with the tremulous anxiety with which he now grasped a purse that was not even his own. In circumstances like his, however, we think, as well as act, from the instinct of habit; and our adventurer, as the danger seemed to approach, only held his gold the tighter, drew more closely round his waist the arms of his sleeping beauty ; and poising himself firmly in the saddle, resolved to defend them both at the hazard of his life.

The horse appeared to know where he was going ; and Carl, who did not, gave him his own way. Once only he was inclined to remonstrate, and for no better reason than that the animal, when the road branched into two parts, thought proper to take the left hand one—an

election which the rider considered inauspicious. For some time, indeed, he was greatly discontented, partly by the obstinate self-will of his associate, and partly at his own irresolution ; for the landscape, so far as it was visible, became more dreary every moment, till at length he imagined that they had again entered the wilderness. Just at that instant, however, a distant noise of waters broke upon his ear, and he concluded, with great relief of mind, that they were at last approaching the stream on the banks of which their destined refuge was situated.

It may seem strange that he should thus wilfully seek shelter in a house, which he knew would that night be invested by the very ruffians from whom he had just fled: but it was not fighting that Carl was afraid of, but fighting at a disadvantage ; not battle, in short, but murder. When the novelists make their heroes insensible to fear, they ought at the same time to deprive them of the other sensibilities of intelligent beings : without this their creations are mis-shapen and grotesque, even as pictures or ideas. Carl was intensely alive to the sensation of fear, as all men are who are not endowed with the souls attributed by the Preacher to the beasts that perish ; but he was not the less ready either to offend or defend when occasion called. In the present case he knew that if the miller had time to send for assistance, and prepare his house for a siege, there was every chance of success ; while on the other hand, if instead of attempting at once to serve himself, and save a harmless family from destruction, he were to take the alternative of wandering about at random the whole night, it would be to expose himself and his charge to as much real danger and to still more harrowing fear.

Whether prudent or imprudent, however, the die was cast ; the mill was before them, tall, dark, and silent ; and the horse, although apparently not accustomed to stop at the door, made but little objection, seeing that the thing was nothing more than reasonable.

Magdalene was by this time awake ; and Carl having lifted her from the pillion, set her down on the steps,

and began to knock, first gently, and then more loudly, at the door.

"Who is there?" demanded a voice within, after a considerable interval.

"Two travellers; a man and a woman, who crave shelter for the night."

"I am unacquainted with the voice, and every body knows that I admit no strangers after sunset."

"If you are wise you will depart from your rule in this instance. I have been at the Fig-Tree, where I learned accidentally, that your house is to be attacked this night; if you let us in I shall repay you for the shelter—which my companion much requires—with the service of my sword."

"What stuff! As if any man in his senses would run for refuge to a house threatened with siege!"

"Well," said Carl, preparing to remount, in some perturbation, "I have no means of offering any proof of the truth of my words, except that which I do not choose to witness. Remember my warning, however; there is no harm in being prepared for the worst; and in the mean time, although an utter stranger in this part of the country, I must take my chance of finding shelter farther on."

"Stay, stay!" cried the miller; "wait for one minute;" and in not a great number of moments, a small window above the door was thrown open, and a lighted candle let down by means of a string.

"Let me see your face," said the miller; and Carl, willing to make a favourable impression before exhibiting his own features, of which his opinion was much less favourable than heretofore, removed Magdalene's veil, and allowed the light to stream on her pale, fair countenance.

"Humph!" said the miller, "a Christian face under a Jewish hood! No matter. It expresses nothing worse than care, and sorrow, and weariness of body and mind. But how now? A minstrel! as I live, the most vagabond figure I ever set eyes on, saving that of Hans Schmidt, who was hanged at Cologne. Why whence,

in the name of wonder, are you ? Whither do you travel ? What is your business ?”

“ I am from Aix-la-Chapelle,” replied Carl, in high dudgeon ; “ I journey to Mayence, and my present business is to find a night’s lodging where I may. I would fain leave my companion with you, who is barely able to go further ; but a man who stands prating in this manner at the window, after hearing that his door is about to be tapped at by Schinderhannes, must be too utter an ass to guard even his own life. Come, Magdalene.”

“ Well, I like that,” said the miller. “ Yes, that is nature. If your intentions were evil, your words would be smoother, and your patience stronger. Besides, a rogue always comes in disguise, while you, to outward appearance, are as desperate a ruffian as ever swung. Come, you shall go no further. As for Schinderhannes, he has more wisdom than to think of carrying a fortress like mine by force of arms ; and he knows right well that old Moritz of the mill never sleeps with more than one eye.”

The house, judging by the entrance, really deserved the name of a fortress. The bolts grated heavily as they were withdrawn, and chains rattled and fell down with a clank. The massive door at length swung slowly open, and Carl and his companion found themselves in the interior of the mill.

The apartment into which they were admitted was large and lofty, the roof supported by immense joists of rough-hewn timber, and ladders placed along the wall to afford access to the upper floor, where sacks of wheat were seen ranged like battlements. Within the chimney-place, which looked like a gigantic oven, benches were set round the fire, that consisted of a large faggot of wood blazing on the pavement ; while without, a semicircle of stools, some of them merely blocks of wood sawn from the trunk of a tree, marked the boundaries of what, in English dwelling-houses, we should call the hearth-stone. Besides the miller’s men, who were distinguished by their powdered locks and whitened cheeks, there were nearly a score of other persons assembled round the fire, most of whom were women, and all ap-

parently way-farers. Some had infants at the breast, some a knapsack at the back. A few appeared to be of the class of small farmers, or tradesmen of the neighbouring towns, and carried pistols at their girdle ; but in general the only weapons of the party were a traveller's staff, on which they leant their foreheads, as they appeared to yield themselves up to the pleasurable sensations produced by warmth and the idea of security.

As the new-comers entered, all raised their heads in languid curiosity. Here a long uncombed beard, hooked nose, sallow complexion, and keen black eye, proclaimed an individual of the Hebrew nation ; and beside him sat a soft, quiet, retiring sample of woman kind, with drooping eye-lids, colourless yet rich cheeks, and form somewhat of the fullest, who appeared to be his wife or sister. There lay at full length a Christian miller, with limbs and trunk as full of lusty life as they could hold, and a face as white as that of any sheeted spectre that ever walked. In one corner a pedlar scarcely interrupted the calculation that was going on in his mind, of his losses and gains, prospective and retrospective, to throw a half-conscious eye upon the strangers ; and in another, a farmer, so far on his way home from some distant fair, started up in the midst of a dream of banditti, and clapping one hand upon his pistol, and the other on his pocket, fixed a dull yet scared look upon the vagabond appointments of our adventurer. As the red light streamed upon the faces and costume of the varied group, Carl thought he had never beheld so striking a picture ; and after room had been made for Magdalene on one of the warmest benches, he hung back himself, in order to enjoy the scene at his leisure.

The host, who appeared to be a strong-headed, good-hearted man, perfectly conscious of the worldly advantages he possessed, inquired minutely into the circumstances of Carl's adventure at the Fig-Tree. He seemed by no means disconcerted, however, even by the episode of the formidable *ram*.

"It must be a mistake," said he, "of my friend Kunz; a fellow with a good heart, but a shallow brain. Schin-

derhannes never molests his neighbours ; he has more sense than that; and, at all events, he knows that a night would be too short for him to batter a breach in my walls. Besides, we are good friends. Many a bottle have we cracked together at this fire-side ; and it is not long since it would have gone hard with him to save his head, had I not hid him among the flour sacks above till the pursuit relaxed. In fact, I have laid myself open, through my good nature, to the suspicions of the authorities ; and if ever a sufficient force is sent out against the freebooters, I shall be the first to be subjected to a domiciliary visit. But come, there is no use in tormenting ourselves about the matter. It would be a shame to have a minstrel among us without shaking these old rafters with a song."

Carl's heart groaned within him at this implied request. His eyes were closing in spite of himself, and there was hardly strength enough left in his fingers to draw a tone from the guitar. It was necessary, notwithstanding, to yield with a good grace to the strange fatality that had beset him, and which seemed to put his musical powers at the command of Jews and Gentiles, rogues and true men alike. He threw his hand faintly over the strings to bespeak attention to the coming strain ; and when all was silent except the wood crackling on the hearth, he began one of those legendary ballads which send a thrill at once of fear and delight through German veins.

He was just enough awake, however, to excite the interest of his audience, and not enough so to gratify it. At the very moment when they hung in breathless attention upon his words, the minstrel's head nodded, his voice sunk to a whisper, and his hand, falling unconsciously along the chords, produced a sound that resembled a dying wail.

"What ails thee ?" asked Moritz testily ; "dost fear to tell it ?"

" Speak out ! Speak out !" cried the rest : and Carl, who was already in the land of dreams, started suddenly, swept the strings with a crash, and pursued his song from the instinct of memory—

“ Hark ! Hark !”—

“ Silence !” cried the miller, jumping from his seat. All followed his eyes to the door, and held their breath while they listened ; but nothing was heard more suspicious than the night-wind moaning among the trees.

“ It was fancy !” said he : “ and yet—no matter. Minstrel, go on !”

“ Hark ! Hark !”—

“ Silence !” A fire of musketry was now heard booming faintly in the distance : some dropping shots followed at irregular intervals, and then all was silent as before.

“ I thought,” cried the miller, laughing, and appearing to be quite relieved by his fears resolving into certainty,—“ I thought it could hardly be that the ears of old Moritz were deceived by anything born of gunpowder ! Be at your ease, my merry guests, for there is no real danger. So near a station of gendarmes, it is impossible that the ungrateful renegades can venture to besiege the mill for more than an hour at longest, and there is not a door or window that would not hold out for six times that space.”

“ Are you not still deceived ?” said Carl, who was now awake. “ Do you imagine the banditti to be provided with cannon, that they commence their assault at such a distance ?”

“ You are a stranger, minstrel,” replied the miller, contemptuously ; “ a foreign vagrant, experimentally acquainted no doubt with such matters at home, but altogether ignorant of the tactics of the renowned Schinderhannes. What we have heard is but the prelude to the concert ; the flourish of trumpets that precedes the fight, and is meant to strike terror into the hearts of the foe. How little he knows of old Moritz ! By this light I gave him credit for more sense as well as more honour,” and the miller apparently more affected by the disreputable nature of the step on the part of Schinderhannes, than by the danger to which it exposed himself, sighed heavily, and turned away.

His meditations were presently disturbed by the sound of a heavy, measured, multitudinous tread approaching the house.

"There go at least twenty pairs of feet to that strain," remarked Carl.

"You are right!" exclaimed Moritz in surprise—"Then they are in earnest! True, good minstrel, twenty or five-and-twenty—and all sober. Even Peter the Black has abstained from his nightly dose; that he may do a deadlier mischief to him who has so often drugged his cold Moselle with Cognac! Oh world! world!"

There was a knocking at the door, as if with the butt end of a musket.

"Louder!" said old Moritz, bitterly.

"Open, in the name of the law!" cried a voice without.

"In the name of the law-breakers!—No matter." Numerous voices were now heard, swearing and debating in French; and Carl, who began to hope that the assailants were gendarmes, suggested the propriety of sending some one acquainted with the premises to look out from the upper window.

"You are an ignoramus, sir minstrel," replied the miller; but it is to be hoped you will profit by the opportunity now afforded you of improvement. It is an essential point of the tactics of the gentlemen out of doors to pass themselves off for French soldiers; and, in the present case, this is the more necessary as they are all known in the neighbourhood. I do partly regret, for your sake, that they are not to force an entrance. It would surprise you, good fellow! There is not one among them who could be recognized by the mother that bore him."

Carl's suggestion in the mean time had been overheard by one of the Jews; who in the excess either of fear or courage, mounted a ladder, till he reached a small window at the upper part of the mill, intended to give light to the store above. Here he was seen raising his head cautiously to look out.

"What is that?" cried Moritz, following the eyes of the guests—"Miserable wretch, forbear! Down, or I

will drag the support from under you ! Better lose a limb than a life—" and he shook the ladder violently.

" Another instant !" said the Jew, raising his head again to the window, from which he had ducked after obtaining a momentary peep.—" As the Lord liveth and reigneth, I do verily believe, that—that—the mins —" the word was lost in a noise like a clap of thunder, that at the moment shook the house ; in which the sound of the ram as it struck the door, the discharge of fire arms, and the shouts of the besiegers, mingled in terrible chorus.

" Down, madman, for thy life!" repeated old Moritz, —in an agony of rage, as he dragged the ladder from the wall. The Jew fell headlong to the floor, without even an effort to save himself !

" Thou hast slain him !" screamed the Hebrew women, rushing tumultuously to the spot—" Woe to thee, man of Belial !—his blood be on thy head!"

" I have slain him not," answered the miller calmly ; " take up your dead and see !" The women did so, and to the amazement of all but Moritz, a wound was perceived in the middle of the forehead, by which a bullet had passed through his brain.

In the mean time the battering of the ram continued at intervals of a few seconds, every blow shaking the house to its foundation ; the glass of the windows came showering down in fragments, and the bullets that effected the damage rattled among the joists of the roof ; while the fierce huzzas of the assailants filled up the measure of the din, so that the besieged at last could not hear one another's voices. All was carried on within in dumb show. The miller stood with folded arms, gazing intently upon the door ; some of his men were ranged behind him, armed with sword and pistol ; but the others still lolled upon their benches, hardly seeming to take more interest in the scene than if it had been a show upon the stage. The attitudes of the travellers were unmodified by their individual temperaments or circumstances. Some were busy separating the more valuable portions of their property from those which they cared less to lose ; the courageous among them employed

themselves in examining the locks of their pistols, and loosening their swords in the scabbard ; and the devout were on their knees, or their faces, busy with crossings and pater-nosterings. In the midst of this confusion, the Jewish women were seen bending over the dead body of their kinsman, beating their breasts and tearing their hair ; while Magdalene, as insensible as they to the feeling of personal apprehension, sat still where she was, throwing an amazed and bewildered eye over the whole group.

The minstrel, although not wholly unused to scenes of strife and tumult, had never witnessed any thing of the kind on so great a scale, or attended by so many interesting circumstances ; and for some time he stood leaning on his sword, gazing upon the picture before him with a feeling of strange enjoyment.

“ They relax !” exclaimed the miller, as one component part of the din—the shouts of the besiegers—sunk suddenly into silence.

“ Not at all,” replied Carl, “ the ram continues as before. How far is it,” added he, “ to the posts of the gendarmes ?”

“ Near enough for that sound to have reached them before now. The French are already on their way to our assistance ; and in five minutes more you shall hear the freebooters’ signal for retreat.” The miller appeared to be right. In five minutes more the thunder of the ram died away, and the firing, that had continued at irregular intervals, suddenly ceased.

“ It is done,” said the miller. “ The ungrateful curs ! had their courage not been withered by the sense of dishonour, they would at least, mustering so strongly as they do, have crossed bayonets with the gendarmes before retiring !” He had hardly done speaking before wreaths of blue smoke issuing from the sides of the door and through the large keyhole, attracted the attention of the whole party. In another moment a crackling noise, followed by a shout from the besiegers, proclaimed that the timber was on fire.

A silence of some moments ensued among the watchers within, and all waited in breathless anxiety to hear the next words of the miller, who was one of those men whose thoughts can rarely be gathered from their looks.

"Will one of you," said he at last, speaking sternly and slowly, "run up to the garret and look through the sky-light?" A man instantly darted from the group, sprang up one of the ladders, and disappeared among the sacks of flour. The silence that followed was only broken by the louder crackling of the wood without, and the furious blazing of the fire; for even the voices of the assailants were hushed in expectation. The messenger returned in little more than a minute.

"The night is windy," said he, "and it blows from the posts of the gendarmes; but there is not a sound upon the gust. The moon has just escaped from the hurrying clouds that surround her, and flings down a light, as strong as day, upon the earth; but there is not so much as a dog upon the whole road." The flames began to roar as they ascended in larger volumes, and the massive door to groan and shrink, and split. The miller became agitated.

"It is hard," said he; digging his hands into his pockets, and striding up and down the apartment, while all made way for him in a kind of awe. "It is hard, hard, hard! The whelp that I have taken upon my knee! the young dog that I have taught his tricks to! And has it come to this? Why what a fool am I to regret it. Is it not of his own seeking?—Hollo! stand out of my way there! Clear the space before the door! Come not a mother's son of you within three-times the range of this hatchet, or by the holy heavens, I will cleave him to the centre!" and Moritz, raising the weapon he had mentioned above his head, took his stand close by a beam behind the door.

The fire was now seen clearly through the rents of the timber; but so strong was the fashion of the door that it did not yet yield. The voices of the assailants were heard in an indistinct howl, like that of a company of

hungry wolves. They spoke impatience and fury, and disdain, without intelligible words ; and at length, wearied even of the rapid action of the flames, the ram was again had recourse to, and the door dashed into a hundred fragments. Their leader sprang over the threshold.

At that moment the miller's axe descended upon the beam of timber near which he stood ; and a portion of the floor gave way (united to the rest by strong hinges), and swung noiselessly in the abyss below. A man's head was seen for an instant diving downwards through the smoke ; a dull, dead, crashing sound followed ; and spots of blood sprang on the planks to a distance of several feet. Another human form leaped through the clouds that enveloped the doorway, and in like manner disappeared. Another, and another, and another.

"They are gendarmes !" cried Carl Benzel with a sudden shout ; and catching a blazing log from the fire he ran with it towards the door. By its light, the assailants, who had already began to dread that they had fallen into an ambuscade, saw the grave open before them that had already swallowed up their comrades, and shrunk back aghast ; while with not less horror did old Moritz perceive that the men whom he had slaughtered so mercilessly were the French police.

In the fury of the moment, the gendarmes fired right and left, wounding men, women and children ; but speedily throwing a bridge of planks over the chasm, they rushed in, and with blows and curses disarmed the whole party, and bound them hand and foot

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONFESSION OF THE BLACK PENITENT.

Carl Benzel found himself on horseback, his legs strapped together beneath the animal's belly, and his arms fastened round the waist of a gendarme who rode before him. On raising his head from the man's shoulder, he at first imagined that he was in a dream, in which things and persons were whimsically, and yet distressingly confounded. He was not even sure of his own personal identity ; but had some suspicion that he had changed *selfs* with Magdalene, and that his obliging conductor was the actual minstrel, still engaged in piloting their way through the wilderness.

By degrees, however, his wandering senses returned, and the transactions of the last hour arose one by one, like spectres, on his memory. He remembered the horror of old Moritz when he found that he had been slaughtering the French police ; the discharge of musketry that followed from the infuriated gendarmes ; the shrieks and imprecations of the wounded ; and the desperate but momentary resistance they offered to the victors in the madness of pain and indignation.

Mingling with the more stirring parts of the drama, he saw again the two Hebrew women, insensible to the scene around them, still bewailing their dead ; their kerchiefs rent in fragments, lying upon the floor ; and their hair, as black as night, hanging in torn tresses upon their uncovered bosoms. Then came, as if to make him doubt the truth of the impression he had received of the triumph of the gendarmes, the fantastic exhibition of Peter the Black dancing wildly round the mourners, a dag-

ger glittering between his teeth, an ocean of Cognac blazing in his eyes, and the fatal hatchet of old Moritz whirling round his head. This vision, however, was accounted for by a faint recollection rising the next moment of his having observed the bandit burning asunder the cords with which his hands were fastened ; and by the more vivid idea of one of the police, after having yielded for some time to the terror which beset the spectators, rushing forward, at the instant his back was turned, and felling him to the earth with a musket.

There was one other form in the strange pageant that floated before the eyes of Carl Benzel, which, although it came the latest, and mingled the least in the business of the scene, lingered the longest in his meditations.

When the gendarmes entered the mill, with Peter the Black, and another prisoner in custody, his attention was immediately drawn to the former of the two as to an acquaintance ; and it was not for some minutes after that he observed the other gazing in his face with an expression which he could not comprehend. This prisoner was a young man, tall, well-shaped, and of rather lofty demeanour ; but his face was so disguised, apparently with black chalk, that it was impossible to distinguish the features. Carl, notwithstanding, was haunted by an impression that he had seen him before, nay, that he knew him intimately ; that his own destiny was some way or other connected with his ; and that the circle of fate which bound them both, comprehended Ida Dallheimer, the peasant Liese, Magdalene—every human being with whom he was connected by the ties either of habit or sympathy ! As he looked more intently at the stranger, he at length began to detect a resemblance between his features and those of the sleeping guest of Kunz Weiner which he had not seen ; and Carl, in sudden alarm, passed his hand before his eyes, as if to drive away some phantom of the brain, the presence of which seemed to indicate a derangement of mind almost amounting to insanity.

When he looked round again, the stranger had shifted his place, and Carl's eye sought unconsciously the only

other present and tangible link in the chain of thought which had passed through his mind. When it rested on Magdalene, she was no longer a spectator, but an actor in the drama. A ruffian's arm was round her waist, and, without waiting to observe whether it was that of a gendarme or a bandit, or whether applied in insult or support, our impetuous adventurer rushed towards her. The action was perhaps misunderstood ; for the next moment he felt himself struck down by a blow on the back of the head, from the stunning effects of which he did not quite recover till he had left the mill more than one league behind him.

The result of his recollections, after they had all been put together, was obvious. The authorities, it appeared, had sent out a force against the banditti on the very night on which the latter had intended to attack the stronghold of old Moritz ; and the firing that had been heard in the distance was not an expedient of Schinderhannes to terrify the inmates of the mill, but arose from the actual conflict of the two parties. This conflict had terminated in the defeat of the freebooters, the capture of two prisoners, and the flight of the rest ; and after exploring, no doubt, the recesses of the Fig-Tree, the military police had directed their arms against the mill, as a suspected place of refuge.

The stranger who had taken such hold of an imagination disordered already by long watching and uneasiness of mind, was apparently an individual of little distinction in the band ; for his face was unknown to the police, and even to Moritz, who would doubtless in his present feelings have been only too happy to have had an opportunity of denouncing a leader of his enemies, however deeply they had sunk in the ruin they had prepared for him. As for Peter the Black, he was recognized by every body, and treated with the mixture of awe and insult with which the vulgar would torment a chained tiger. Both of these persons were the companions of Carl's present captivity. He was himself either supposed to be a member of the band, or at least an accomplice of old Moritz in defending his fortress. But the former was more probably the case, as he had been sepa-

rated from the miller and his men, from his fellow-guests, from Magdalene—and now found himself hurried along the midnight road, the comrade of banditti and the prisoner of gendarmes.

The night was dark and gusty, and he could only imperfectly see the company with whom he travelled. He could count a dozen gendarmes, notwithstanding, including the three who rode double with the prisoners ; and intermixed with them there were two or three persons, apparently farmers of the neighbourhood. The police and their captives maintained a sullen silence ; but the others were loud and bitter in their execrations of that formidable hydra which was now only scotched, not killed, and entertained their neighbours, as they spurred along, with an account of the wrongs and losses they had sustained. After some time, even the gendarmes began gradually to talk, and at length the conversation became general and tumultuous.

“ Benzel !” whispered the stranger, when the din was loudest, and their two horses rubbed sides accidentally.

“ Who speaks ?” demanded Carl, starting.

“ Listen without reply. Ida Dallheimer is a prisoner in one of the strong holds of Schinderhannes.”

“ Merciful heaven !”

“ So long as the master-bandit is at liberty she runs no risk ; although the efforts of her friends for her liberation will be vain till the arrival of the ransom agreed upon for the whole Dallheimer party. If, on the other hand, Schinderhannes be taken, he will be executed on the instant ; and his ferocious followers, before breaking up the band, will in all probability commit such outrage upon their captives as it is terrible to think of. Will you step in between your mistress and her fate ?”

“ I will.”

“ Will you give your life, if necessary, for hers ?”

“ I will.”

“ The whole country is alarmed. Detachments of the military are called in from the surrounding districts to aid the police. Nothing can restore quiet, nothing can render it possible for the chief to escape another

week, but the intelligence that Schinderhannes is taken. You resemble him. Do you understand me?"

" You wish me then to personate this tremendous villain!"

" I do,"

" To be torn in a thousand pieces by the rabble, or hoisted out of their clutches upon a gibbet?"

" If necessary. You refuse! That is enough. I had mistaken your character!" and the two interlocutors were separated as accidentally as they had been thrown into contact.

Carl's brain began to reel. Fatigue and anxiety, uniting with the effects of the blow he had received on the head, almost deprived him of the faculty of thinking. The stranger's voice was familiar to his ear. He thought, for a moment, of one of the comrades of his dissipation; but no, the idea was preposterous. The figure indeed bore some resemblance; but instead of black, bushy locks, a redundancy of gold-coloured hair, hung in wreaths, almost like a woman's, from the stranger's uncovered head, and overflowed his shoulders. Whatever he was, he was the friend, perhaps the emissary, of Ida. At any rate, there was at least a chance of his being so; and on that chance,—slight, dim, distant though it were—would he hesitate to peril his life?

" I consent!" cried he aloud, at the risk of awakening the suspicions of the guards.

" It is enough," was the reply.

" Silence in the rear!" said the commander of the march at the same moment. " Look out sharply, comrades, for we are entering a wood, where we may meet with some of the dispersed outlaws."

" Halt!" shouted the stranger.

" Who cries halt? Forward, I say!"

" Halt, if you be men! Your comrade is choking me—he is in the death-struggle—his wounds ——"

" It is a lie!" cried the gendarme; " he is ——" All laughed.

" Nay, nay," interrupted the farmers; " let us see fair play, even to a robber. Halt, till we inquire what is

the matter;" and they rode tumultuously round the stranger's horse.

"Halt! halt!" was repeated from mouth to mouth; and they all gathered about the same nucleus.

"He is indeed choking him," said one.

"Drag him away!" cried another.

"There,"—exclaimed the stranger, panting, as he tore the hand of the gendarme from the gripe it seemed to have taken of his throat. "You would not believe me! Take hold of him; he is going—By the holy Mary, he is gone!" The gendarme was no sooner freed from the embrace of his terrified prisoner than he fell from his stirrups upon the ground, and was taken up a dead man.

This awful occurrence seemed to have a greater effect upon the party than all the bloodshed that had preceded it. They remained in breathless silence for a considerable interval; during which nothing was heard but the wailing gusts of wind that swept through the forest. The farmers at length began to murmur one with another. They thought it strange "that so important a duty should have been intrusted to a wounded man. Who could tell but that one of the two unknown prisoners might be Schinderhannes himself? It looked like design on the part of the gendarmes, who could not be expected to feel an interest so strong as theirs in bringing the criminals to justice."

"Do you accuse *us* of treason, you heartless curs?" cried the officer of police, overhearing them. "Did *we* hang back out of sight during the skirmish, and ride up when it was over, to claim the victory? Did *we* scamper off from the mill when it was invested, on pretence of pursuing the fugitives, instead of waiting to share the danger? Which of you now will take the place of our dead comrade, and consent to have the prisoner strapped to his waist?"

"Why, that will I!" replied one of the farmers, sturdily; "I have no notion of losing our prize, either through treachery or stupidity; nor do I care to be bullied by a gendarme."

"We will stand by you," cried his companions ; "and if the police do their duty as well, there will be no fear, either of escape or rescue." It was finally arranged, although not without abundance of oaths and imprecations, that the farmer who was the boldest in speech should have his mettle tried in action ; and he who had accepted the challenge was accordingly hoisted upon the saddle before the prisoner, and the arms of the latter secured so firmly round his waist, that it was impossible for either to undo the bonds without assistance.

They had not proceeded far into the wood when the near "tu-whoo !" of an owl fell upon the ear of Carl Benzel like a cry of evil omen.

"Silence, you old witch!" cried one of the farmers, laughing—"tu-whoo!" Many of the gendarmes joined in the laugh ; but their leader, wheeling suddenly round, levelled his pistol at the author of the jest. The next moment the weapon fell from his hand as a musket shot rang through the thicket, and in an instant after he dropped lifeless from his saddle.

The police sprang towards their chief ; and the farmers and their prisoner sprang across the ditch that bounded the road, and dived into the forest. The gendarmes lost a moment in amazement ; but recovering their senses, most of them darted after the fugitives. Their pursuit, however, was vain. The false farmers had each vanished in an opposite direction, and in addition to the confusion which this created, a number of small lights were now seen flitting and vanishing in different parts of the forest.

Peter the Black, in the mean time, although buried in deep slumber when the disturbance took place, no sooner heard the sound of a musket than by an instinctive effort he forced his arms, the bonds of which with all his strength, he could not break, over his conductor's head ; and then, dashing the astonished gendarme to the ground, spurred his horse across the ditch. He would probably have escaped like the rest, had he not been caught by the branch of a tree ; beneath which the horse rushed with headlong speed, leaving his rider lying upon his back on the ground, bound hand and

foot. The spring with which the terrified animal liberated his heels from the legs of his rider, which were bound at the ankles with leathern thongs, would have broken to pieces any limb of more delicate construction; but Peter the Black was not a man of ordinary mould.

As for Carl, his first idea was, that he ought to remain quiet, and his second, that being in somewhat of a dangerous predicament already, it would be better to escape if he could. His final determination, however, it must be confessed, was not the result of reasoning. The example before him—the apparent success of his friend Peter—the shouts—the shots—the strife—all had the effect of intoxication upon his spirits, and bending back the gendarme with him by main force over the crupper, they both fell to the ground. The horse being fortunately possessed of great patience, stood stock still; and our unlucky Carl, whose back was almost broken by the fall, took the hint very readily, and after a few convulsive efforts to free his feet, submitted with a good grace to be deposited as before behind the saddle. It is not unlikely that his self-esteem received some consolation from the spectacle which soon after presented itself of Peter the Black carried back in triumph, and seated with a conductor on the horse of the deceased officer. The party then, diminished from twelve gendarmes to eight (including two dead ones), the balance being lost in the forest, set forward again at a good round pace, and arrived without further adventure at the small town of Birkenfeld, in the valley of the Nahe.

The river, which is as yet an inconsiderable stream, presents some points of pictorial effect just before entering the town; and these are the more remarkable to a traveller coming through the wild and dreary country that lies between the Nahe and the Hobe-Wald. In particular, the ruins of an old fortress, consisting of a single tower, rise with an air of romance from the edge of a cliff, beneath which the river, compressed between its narrowed banks, rushes with violence. This, although not the prison of the town, was the place appointed by the authorities for the reception of Peter the Black and

his companion ; and it would hardly have been possible to have found a stronghold better calculated for the purpose.

On the side of the river the tower was defended by nature, for the cliff on which it stood ran up like a wall from the deep waters below ; while the other three sides were surrounded by ramparts, from which the only outlet was a narrow wicket. That the prisoners were treated with the distinction of being lodged so securely, was owing to the reputation of Peter the Black, who had already broken out of every prison in which he had been confined ; and indeed the captors seemed to be by no means sure of him even here.

It was not enough to leave him in the same apartment with Benzel, in which the only opening besides the iron door, was a window looking upon the river, not large enough to admit the body of a man, and yet strongly barred. They did not consider, even supposing it to have been practicable to enlarge this opening, that the height of the tower, in addition to that of the rock, would render the descent fatal ; but, in order to guard against all things, possible and impossible, they thrust him into a cavity below the apartment, letting him down with cords fastened to his shoulders, through a hole that gaped in the floor. Peter, in the meantime, who had gone to sleep again as soon as he saw that his attempt at escape had failed, was wholly insensible to the change that was taking place in his situation. A drowsy groan, or a muttered oath, now and then marked his displeasure while they were untying his legs ; but he suffered himself to be swung down into the abyss without a murmur, and when the gaoler, sliding after him along the rope to remove that dangerous appendage, reached the bottom, he found him, and left him, "slumbering as innocently as a babe."

Carl, in the meantime, it may be supposed, was by no means an uninterested spectator of this proceeding. By the sound of the descending body, he conjectured rightly that the cavity was a vault of considerable depth, and that the security of the prisoner consisted in the impossibility of his reaching the opening—many feet beyond

his head—without the assistance of his gaolers above. When he sent a glance round his own apartment, however, into which the moon now looked through the narrow window, he was surprised at the needless trouble they had taken. All was solid stone, except the door, which was solid iron; and in pacing along the floor to restore the circulation of his cramped limbs, the dull dead echo that answered to his footsteps sounded like the voice of despair.

The reflections of the minstrel in this predicament were none of the most comfortable.

The desperado who had demanded, and to whom he had given so unreasonable a promise, would of course make ample and speedy use of it. To-morrow the report would be spread that Schinderhannes was taken, and all the world would crowd to gaze even upon the walls that held him. He would then either be thrust into the dungeon with Peter the Black, or, which was far more likely, be carried out for instant execution (upon the false confession which he was bound in honour to make!) and hung up, like a dog, in the midst of the execrations of his fellow men.

This was not a pleasant prospect; and yet Carl would have contemplated it without much uneasiness had he been sure that his fate would be the means of saving Ida. Her being captured by the banditti, and detained for ransom, were not, he knew, occurrences without parallel in those strange times—but was there any probability of the other portions of the stranger's story being equally true? To Schinderhannes Ida owed her captivity, and it was now, it seemed, the business of Carl to enable her goaler to return in safety to the charge of his captive! This was the common-sense view of the subject. As for the argument of the stranger, founded on the outrages which *might* be perpetrated by a band of subaltern robbers at the moment preceding their dispersion, it was evidently a delusion. At such a time "*sauve qui peut!*" is the word; and the terrified outlaw is only anxious to escape from the punishment of past crimes, without thinking of committing new ones.

And yet, in what way could this mysterious person's knowledge of his name and circumstances be accounted for? Was he really an emissary of Ida? or was there any meaning in the fantastic trick of his imagination which had identified him with the sleeping guest of Kunz Weiner? Was it the beautiful and generous Liese, who seemed to have been transported by enchantment into the midst of his adventures, who was thus working out, in so mysterious a manner, the preservation of his mistress? Carl perplexed himself in vain with these questions; but at his years, and with his temperament, it is hardly necessary to say, that the wilder and more romantic hypothesis formed the basis of his actions, however little it may have satisfied his judgment. He determined, therefore, come what might, to keep his promise to the stranger, whether extorted on false pretences or not, and to yield himself up without a struggle to the controul of his singular destiny.

By and by the ideas of Carl Benzel became even less distinct. He had thrown himself down on a heap of straw, and already felt those dim but pleasing sensations that attend the moment when the angel of sleep hovers above the weary head,

“ And draws around an aching breast
The curtain of repose.”

At times however, he started, as some new ideas arose, like the threatening shadows that haunted the slumbers of Macbeth. Magdalene, whom he had forgotten for some hours, wandered like a ghost about the apartment, and the Jew Ishmael rushed through the gloom, whooping wildly, “ Too-whoo! too-whoo!!

“ What is your secret?” murmured Carl, half-awake, half-asleep. “ What did you whisper into the ear of Magdalene, that struck her to the earth like the blow of a dagger! Why did you leave your mistress, whom you loved better than life, and plunge into the forest at a call which filled you with fear and aversion?”

“ Because,” answered the spectre,—“ listen,” and he placed his lips to his ears. Carl sprung upon his knees. So strong was the illusion, that he looked round for the

visitor of his midnight slumbers. All, however, was silent and solitary as before ; the moon shone steadily on the opposite wall, and our adventurer, muttering a hasty prayer, replaced his head on its pillow of straw, and in a few moments more was sound asleep.

In this blessed state he remained for several hours ; and the day had already dawned when he was awakened by a cry of " Help! help!" He started up and listened. His ideas were confused ; and for a moment he scarcely knew where he was. The cry, however, was repeated in a sepulchral tone, that seemed to come from the bowels of the earth, and he presently remembered his fellow prisoner, and the dreadful place of his confinement.

" What is the matter ?" cried he, looking down into the chasm, and endeavouring in vain to distinguish any object in the gloom.

" Will you not help her ? shouted Peter the Black.

" Her ? Whom do you mean ?"

" Thunder and lightening ! have you the heart of a stone ? Do you not see her drowning ? There—that is her hand above the water ! Villain, will you not save her ? Do you fancy you are her husband, that you stand thus gazing calmly on her last agony ?"

" Awake, in the name of God ! Awake ! Ho ! You are asleep !

" It is a lie : I am broad awake ! I stretch out my arm to her in vain : she cannot reach it. I would jump into fifty fathoms to save one shred of her golden hair, but the water flies from me. Now the hand sinks, but the head floats. The eyes—the eyes are fixed on mine ! They burn my brain ; they boil my blood. Wife ! wife ! Her lips unclose, but the wave drowns her voice. What is it she would say ? What word is that rumbling and gurgling in her throat ? ' Mur-mur-murderer !' It is a lie ; for I repent ! I do not will the deed ; you shall live in spite of hell ! Help ! help !" and the voice of the conscience-troubled wretch, that had risen to a wild shriek, died moaningly away in the recesses of the vault.

"Pray!" said Carl, shuddering—"Pray, pray, unhappy man. Unburthen your soul to its Creator, and He will give you rest."

"Will you see me perish?" said Peter the Black, in a faint and broken voice.

"What can I do for you! God only can dissipate the shadows that haunt you."

"Give me some brandy."

"I have none. Go pray."

"Then, thunder of heaven! draw me out of this hole. Do you not hear the plashing of the water? Will not that convince you? Are these shadows? It is a lie: Help! help!"

"Throw me up your frock."*

"There—it is of canvass, but not long enough. Cut it in strips. Make haste, make haste!" and Carl, with the assistance of his penknife, manufactured a rope from the garment; and making it fast above, let down the other end to his comrade. He then, with infinite difficulty, drew up the prisoner till he was able to reach the opening of the hole with his hands; and this was no sooner effected than Peter the Black, clutching the stones firmly with his iron-strung fingers, sprang up at a single bound into the middle of the room.

Carl shuddered as he looked in his face. It was of a dead yellow, like that of a long unburied corpse; and the black and matted locks, dripping with perspiration, that hung down over his forehead till they mingled with his beard, gave him the appearance of one who had been drowned. His eyes were fixed upon those of his deliverer with a dull glare which seemed to possess some strange power of fascination; and the two stood thus, gazing in silence into one another's faces, for a considerable time.

"Will you pray now?" said Carl at length, with a strong effort. "Will you unburthen your soul to God?"

"No," replied Peter, "God knows the story too well already;—but I will unburthen my soul."

* A garment worn in some parts of the continent for the protection of more valuable clothing. It is generally blue, and not unlike in shape the "smock-frock" of an English labourer.

"Not to me, I will not listen."

"Silence! You shall listen; it will do you good: and the lesson is all I can render you in return for the service you have just done me."

"You must know," said he, after a pause, "that I was born on the banks of the Rhine, no matter where, and that, on coming to man's estate, I made proposals of marriage to a young girl of the village where I lived. Do you laugh? I know you laugh in your heart: but it is true for all that. Now mind me, I had loved this girl from my boyhood; I say loved, do you understand? You think I mean lust—it is a lie. I could pray *then*; and she was half the thought of my prayer. Was not that love? When my mother gave me her dying blessing, I said within myself, 'I transfer it to her.' Was not that love. Well. And so I continued to think of her, to dream of her, to pray for her, to twist her idea up with my heart-strings, to incorporate it with the life-blood in my veins, and then at last I told her that I loved her.

"Now mind me. I was as black as hell, and she as fair as heaven; I was like the rubber-fiend of the mountains, tall, huge, ill-fashioned; and she like the fairy of the sward, small, slight, and delicate. How could she love me! It was out of nature; it was impossible: and so she told me, first with a smile, then with a tear, but never with a blush! Well, well, said I to myself, if she cannot love, she will at least endure me; and endurance grows into habit; and out of habit arises liking. And so I loved on.

"And so, after a time, I asked her again to love me; and she still refused. I grew desperate. She was growing up into a thing so beautiful that the souls of men bowed down to worship her as a visible ray of the Almighty. Fiercely did I glare around me when any one approached the temple of my idol. Alas! I was only the dragon of the ballad, not the knight.

"Now you must know I was rich in those days; and this angel of mine was woman-born. Her mother said to me, she cannot love you as a young maid loves her lover—marry her, and perhaps she will love you as a

wife. The old bawd ! To prostitute the heart of her own daughter ! Yet I clung to the suggestion as if it involved the salvation of my soul, and at last I——”

“ But you did not——”

“ It is a lie ! I married her. How could she help it ? She had no father, no friend, no adviser : she could but weep, and faint, and grow pale, and thin, and then her mother said it would all go off, and she would love me the better—and then we were married.

“ Now mind me. There was one other who had told his love, but she did not accept it : she merely referred him to her mother for her decision. What, you smile ?——”

“ No——”

“ Silence ! you smile in your heart. Well : the decision was given against him ; there was no more to be said—was it my fault ? But she, after the wedding was over, she grew still more pale and thin ; although, as her mother had foretold, she loved me, or *seemed* to love me with the love of a wife. I was not satisfied ; she brought me forth a child, but I was not satisfied. Then she wept. She wept over her infant’s cradle ; she wept when her infant smiled in her eyes. What did that mean ? She started when I came into her presence ; she answered me hurriedly and incoherently ; she ran eagerly to do my bidding, and brought me anything but what I wanted. What did that mean ?

“ Hear me now. Returning one evening from a drinking party, I saw a man wandering about the house, gazing up at the windows, going and then returning ; stopping ; musing ;—what matter ? It was but a man : yes, but it was *the* man ! I rushed into the room where my wife was sitting ; she screamed as I entered. What did that mean ? Guilt ! guilt ! I struck her to the ground.

“ From that moment my house was hell. I lived in the tavern ; I gamed ; I drank ; and when the harlot dared to reproach me, I cursed and struck her.

“ Then her brother interfered—her only brother—and begged her back of me ; offering to take her without a dollar, or a second gown. I refused. Why ? Do you r ? Dare not for your life !—because I loved her still !

But she was cunning. I suspected ; I believed ; yet I had no proof—till it came upon me like a thunder-bolt. Returning home one evening I saw *him* once more prowling about the house. He disappeared ; but I watched like a hungry tiger ; and at last I saw her in the garden—her—my wife—folded in the arms of a man. A hedge was between us ; the night was dark and gusty ; and he only spoke in murmurs, whispering, like Satan, in her ear.

“ ‘Once again,’ said he, ‘will you fly with me ? I ask it for the sake of your own life, which is in danger from the ruffian, and for the sake of your child.’

“ ‘I yield,’ replied she, weeping ; ‘to-morrow night at twelve o’clock !’

“ ‘The boat will be ready at the Point ——’ The wind carried away their further words, and also another sound—holy heaven !—it resembled a kiss !

“ At the hour of twelve on the following night, I was at the Point, sitting on the stones beneath the bow of the boat, which rocked gently on the gentle tide. What do you think I was about ? Ha ! ha !—Guess : it is a capital joke, I was amusing myself with drilling a hole in the vessel’s bottom ! When I had finished, the fugitives came rushing down the beach, and I had only time to get behind a rock, when they sprang into the boat and shoved off.”

“ Then you relented——”

“ It is a lie ! They gained the middle of the broad and rapid Rhine ; and then the skiff swung round, and round, and round. The moon looked down suddenly through a rent in the clouds to see the conclusion ; and as the idea of danger, of certain, instant, inevitable death flashed upon the mind of my rival, he leaped up in the boat. I saw his face just as I see yours now. Do you not envy me ? ha ! Can you picture the feelings of joy, pride and exultation that swelled my veins, and heaved my labouring breast ? Come, speak out. There were two, you know, two victims : the woman was my wife, and the man ——”

“ Dreadful villain !”

“ Silence ! *The man was her brother !*”

"Holy God ! but you were still able to save them—"

"Hush ! hark !"

"What do you hear ?"

"Look down into the vault. Listen ! It is theplash
of waters. Did you hear the cry ? Help ! help !
help !"

"It is fancy."

"Hush!" and Peter the Black, trembling in every
limb, his teeth chattering, and his hair rising on his
head, pressed backward against the wall, as if he would
have shrunk for refuge into the solid stone.

"For shame !" cried Carl, struggling with the con-
tagion of horror, "rouse thee—be a man!"

"A man ! Can a man look upon such a sight as that ?
Can the ears of a man listen to those fearful cries ! Do
you bid me be a man ? Oh, never, never, never, never
more !"

CHAPTER VIII.

PRISON HOURS.

It was evident that the brain of Peter Schwarz was still affected by the dose administered to him by the jolly landlord of the Fig-tree. A quart of brandy was perhaps an extra allowance even for him; and at any rate his sleep since then had been too short, and too much disturbed to exert any permanent influence on the nervous system. Having unburthened his mind in the manner we have related, he began to wander, with great irregular strides, through the room, as if searching for something on which to expend the surplus of his animal energy, and bestowing on our adventurer every now and then as he passed, one of those dull glares which are worse to bear than a look of absolute hostility.

"Do you know," said he, stopping suddenly short, while his meaningless face was lighted up with an ex-

pression of as much fierceness as might be supposed to linger on the features of a dead man ; " do you know why I confessed myself to you, who are neither priest nor angel ? Answer me that ? Was it for *your* pleasure, think you ? Was it at *your* bidding ? "

" No," replied Carl, calmly ; " I sought not your confidence."

" It is a lie ! You looked at me, and I knew that I must answer. When you drew me out of that vault—which is worse than hell, because there are no flames in it, nor company, nor men's voices, nor strife, nor struggling—I knew what it was for. And now what will you do ? Will you bring me to trial for drowning my wife ? Ho ! ho ! ho ! As if human law could touch *me* ! Why, what a fool you are ; my neck would turn the edge of the headsman's axe ; the rope that held me would break like a gossamer thread. Where could I die but where I murdered *her* ? What other instrument of death could harm me than the waves of the cannibal Rhine ? I knew when I fled from the spot that I should one day return to fly no more. The same voice that cried ' Help ! ' called after me ' Come back, come back ! ' and as I fled the more, her drowning scream was mingled with shrieks of laughter. Will you bring the question to proof ? Call the gaoler and his myrmidons and try what they can do. Look here"—and, seizing one of the iron bars of the window with both hands, he wrenched it from its bed : " Now let them come. What ho ! Rascals, do you not hear ? It is I who call—Peter the Black !" and he smote the door with his newly-acquired weapon till the whole building resounded with the din. In another moment the huge key turned in the lock, the door sprang open, and the gaoler, followed by two subalterns, rushed into the room.

" What, the tiger loose ? " cried the principal functionary—" Back one of you, and call up the guard. Good Peter, you must down again into your hole ; and you, sir vagabond, whom nobody knows, you shall down with him ! " Peter in the meanwhile had retired to the further end of the room, where he stood for a

moment, his stolid features moving and twisting, his dead eyes gleaming with preternatural light, his teeth grating and grinding, and the white foam gathering about his lips.

" You shall see," said he, in a voice scarcely louder than a whisper, while he nodded to Carl ; " You shall see ! You shall see whether rope or steel has a commission for Peter Schwarz !" and with a sudden bound, and a shout like the roar of a wild beast, he sprang upon the gaoler and his follower. One he felled to the ground, the other he pitched into the vault, and crying, " Follow me if you dare be free !" he bounded down the stairs.

Carl hesitated for an instant. To escape would be to cut the gordian knot of his difficulties at once ! To escape would be to personate Schinderhannes to the life, whom no chains could bind, and no prison hold ! The next moment he snatched the sword from the hand of the prostrate subaltern, and rushed down into the court.

A single glance convinced him that there was no hope ; for the small wicket was shut, and the semicircle of wall was at least twelve feet high. He crossed swords, however, in desperation with the officer of the guard who ran to receive him, and continued an aimless struggle till overpowered by numbers. Peter Schwarz he saw was still fighting desperately at the other end of the area, where the wall met the tower at the edge of the rock. He owed his life, however, it was evident, to the forbearance of his enemies. Shut up by impassable walls in a court not a dozen yards in diameter, and defended by twenty men, what could he do ? More than once a musket was levelled at his breast, and the next moment dropped, as the idea occurred to the marksmen that it would be greater glory to take so famous a bandit alive. All, however, closed fiercely in upon him with their bayonets and halberds, maddening with shame to think they were defied so long by a single man.

Peter, in the meantime, continued whirling without intermission his terrible weapon round his head ; but the shout which he gave on seeing the diversion made in

his favour by the minstrel, struck still more dread into his enemies. This at last was over : Carl was secured ; and half the garrison were rushing back to throw themselves upon him.

" Ho ! " cried he at the moment, with another of his peculiar roars which made the heart tremble, " well done ! Rope and steel ! Ha ! ha ! " All looked round in a panic, and Peter stooping instantaneously, tore up the iron grating which covered the mouth of a sewer of the fortress, hurled it in his enemies' faces, jumped into the cavity, and disappeared.*

Carl was hurried up stairs, and flung into his prison. The din without was deafening. Shouts and curses rose simultaneously with the jowling of the alarm bell ; and, mingling with these, the clash of swords proclaimed that some of the disappointed soldiers had gone to loggerheads on the spot. He flew to the window. Peter was already across the river, and scouring up the banks, with a shower of bullets from the lower windows of the tower hissing round his head. He seemed to bear a charmed life. The earth was torn up at his feet, the shrubs broken by his side—and still he kept on his way: till at length he gained the edge of a thicket, he turned round for an instant, yelled his war-whoop of defiance, and then plunged into the trees.

Carl still stood gazing from the window long after the object of his interest had disappeared. By and by he saw several mounted gendarmes riding at full speed towards the tower, and shortly after, groups of men, women, and children, appeared hurrying across the fields, and flocking from all quarters towards the same common point. These phenomena could not be misunderstood. The curtain was now fairly up, whether for farce or tragedy; and the moment had evidently arrived when our luckless adventurer was to appear on the stage (perhaps on the scaffold !) in the character of the renowned Schinderhannes. The agents of the stranger,

* Another escape of the same Peter Schwarz, while crossing a river with a strong escort, gave rise (in the author's opinion) to the admirable scene of this sort in " Rob Roy "

or his employers, must have been numerous and zealous, for not only on the sides commanded by the windows of the town, but round the whole circle of the visible horizon, were that day seen the evidences of their industry. It was hardly mid-day, when Birkenfeld and its environs looked like a vast encampment ; and those who were too late to get near the wicket of the tower, and thus be able to catch a momentary glimpse of the area within the ramparts, thought themselves abundantly fortunate when so located as to obtain a view of the walls which contained the daring and dreadful bandit. Numbers of these more unambitious spectators were collected on the opposite side of the river in front of the tower ; and thus enjoyed the felicity, from which the rest were wholly debarred, of sometimes seeing face to face at the window, the object of their curiosity.

It may be imagined that Carl Benzel, under such circumstances, was not wholly at his ease. He in fact became strongly agitated; and, in pacing through the room, when the door, which he had laid hold of mechanically, yielded to his hand, and sprang open, he started in absolute terror as he saw the landing-place guarded, not by a single sentry, but by a crowd of armed men. The circumstance of the door being unfastened was in itself not a little surprising ; but our adventurer accounted for it by the agreeable supposition, that it was intended to betray him into a second attempt to escape, when he might be put to death upon the spot.

Nor was this so wild an idea as may be imagined. The French laws had not been so long in operation as to work easily ; and, owing to the hatred borne by a large class of the people to foreign dictation, as well as to the ignorance which prevailed in the legal body of the habits, and even language of the country, the strangest mistakes were committed. However strong might be the evidence, it was impossible to calculate with certainty on the condemnation of a criminal. Sometimes, indeed, the comparatively innocent found themselves, with great surprise, within a step of that scaffold which they had only contemplated in distant prospect, while the principal villain of the piece laughed in his sleeve as he

marched merrily to the galleys. The French judges, besides, were exceedingly delicate in the performance of their duty. They knew with what a jealous eye they were looked upon by the natives ; and for this reason, more than for the sake of humanity, were in the constant habit of straining the thousand meshes of the law so widely, that the bulkiest sinner might have a chance of escape.

The pressing danger of Carl Benzel's case appeared to be, that his captors would take the law into their own hands. He had been made a prisoner while resisting with force of arms, the officers of the republic ; and by the summary process of military justice, he could almost at once be carried down stairs into the court, and shot. This would save trouble, prevent accidents, satisfy the respectable classes of the people, and rid the country at a blow of the terrible incubus which besetted her commerce and industry. The vast association, of which Schinderhannes was the head, had been formed, and was now sustained by his single genius. At his death it would no doubt crumble into its original elements, each portion of which could easily be grappled with in turn and destroyed. As for Peter Schwarz, to whom he had succeeded in the captainship of a handful of men whom he afterwards converted into a little army, although individually a fierce and formidable robber, his habits had gradually become so grotesque, and his draughts of Cognac or Kirschenwasser so copious, as to leave him little short of a madman.

But where was this *army*, it will be asked, of the redoubted Schinderhannes ? Encamped in a forest of a few leagues in extent, or marching to pillage through a country governed by the French laws, and bristled over with French bayonets ? This must for the present remain a mystery ; and as our true narration will at any rate be called a romance in spite of us, we claim the liberty of managing it our own way.

Carl Benzel had yet another consummation of his calamities to dread, which appeared quite as bad as immediate execution. If it was determined that he should take his trial in the regular way, a special commission would

no doubt be sent to the spot on purpose. This was like the mountain coming to Mahomet ; but, however cumbersome the proceeding might be, it appeared to be absolutely necessary ; for the Mahomet of the Rhine could never on any occasion be persuaded to go to the mountain. Schinderhannes, in fact, had frequently been to all appearance secure in the fangs of the law ; but the cortège had no sooner begun to move towards the seat of justice, than *he* began to move in an opposite direction. No dungeon was strong enough to hold him; he laughed at locks and bolts ; and, like certain ingenious performers on the stage, could have danced a hornpipe in fetters.

If, however, the fictitious bandit was to be tried where he was, he would doubtless be thrust into the vault from which Peter the Black escaped ; and the guard would be stationed, not outside the door, as at present, but within the apartment. It was this idea that blanched the cheek of our adventurer ; for—whether owing to its associations with the guilty horrors which had beset the mind of its last tenant, or to the dismal gloom, and damp unwholesome smell, or to all these combined—that dungeon seemed more terrible to his imagination than death itself. He swore an oath, that, rather than submit to be plunged into such an abyss, he would wrest a weapon of defence from his guards, and, selling his life as dearly as possible, die upon the points of their swords ; and, as a testimony to himself of this determination, he raised one of the massive stones of the pavement, and placed it like a lid, over the hole.

While letting down the stone in the position he meant it to occupy, a deep and sudden groan from the bottom of the vault made him drop the lid with a crash, and start back several paces. He was bewildered for a moment : and the idea crossed his mind that the ravings of Peter the Black had not been altogether the produce of a diseased imagination. In another instant, however, he was ashamed of the superstition ; and he drew near to listen, for the purpose of convincing himself that the sound could have had no existence in reality. But the sound, whatever it might be, was continued, although so faintly,

now that the vault was shut, as to be scarcely audible; and Carl, in strong curiosity, mingled in no small degree with awe, threw himself upon his knees, and raised the lid.

An indistinct murmur, like a succession of muttered groans, was all he could catch for some moments ; but in a little while his ear, accustomed to the sound, was able to separate it into its component parts, and he heard a human voice pronounce the following words :

“ O Lord ! O Lord ! what is this ? Lottchen, my good wife ! Lottchen, you jade, why don’t you speak ? Don’t you know it is time for me to go and inspect the prison, and see that the black tiger is safe in his cage ? Give me the keys, Lottchen. Thousand devils, how dark it is ! The bed is damp— Thunder and water-spouts, what have the children been about ! I say get up ; hit me a slap on the face, good Lottchen ; tickle me, turn me, pummel me well, for I am in the nightmare. Holy saints, where am I ? I am lying asleep in a ditch. Oh the sin of Cognac ! Help ! Help !”

Carl had for some time been quite out of the way of smiling ; but a gleam resembling sunshine did appear on his grave countenance, while he listened to the soliloquy of the gaoler, and called to mind the summary manner in which he had been deposited in the pit by Peter the Black.

“ You are in the vault of the tower,” said he, “ you foolish man ; in the very hole where it was your purpose to have placed me ! Throw me up the coil of cord which I know your profession requires you to carry in your pocket ; and, although you little deserve it, I will be your deliverer.” The gaoler’s recollection returned on the instant ; and he was about to avail himself, with many thanks, of the kindness of his prisoner, when a doubt suggested itself to his mind of the use to which his cord might be applied by the vagabond minstrel.

“ I am truly indebted to you,” replied he, “ my good fellow ; and if you are executed while in my custody, I pledge my honour that every thing shall be made as comfortable for you as possible. In the meantime permit me to say, that it would be less out of rule for me

to be drawn up by my own subalterns ; and if you will just open the door which must of necessity be unlocked, there being no second key in existence that would fit it, and let the sentry know that I want to be delivered from my own gaol——”

“ All in good time,” said Carl Benzel carefully letting down the stone, and stopping up the chinks with earth; for the idea had just struck him that the cord, if not the key, might be turned to some better account. The next moment, however, when he recollect ed the size of the window, he knew that he could have no use for a cord, while the key could serve little purpose since the door was already unfastened ; and he was on the point of fulfilling the wishes of the prisoner, when, to his great surprise, Kunz Weiner, the jolly host of the Fig-tree, entered the room.

“ Aha Captain ! ” said he, shaking him heartily by the hand, “ What, caged at last ? I knew that some misfortune was about to happen to one of my acquaintances ; for my conscience pricked me last night for allowing a vagabond to steal my horse, and it is but rarely indeed that my conscience pricks me. . (So, sir,” continued he, in an undertone, you were not satisfied with my hospitable fire-side ? Well, well, you will see the difference.) It being necessary, it seems, for some honest and respectable house-keeper to identify you, I have come here all the way from the Fig-tree on purpose, well knowing that you would find nobody else to do it in so kind and friendly a spirit. (With me, you foolish fellow, you would not have had a hard word, or a sour look, even at the moment they held the pistol to your ear, supposing that accident were to occur : but here ! Well, well, you will see the difference.) And so, captain, with respectful salutation, and wishing you a comfortable death, I humbly take my leave.” Honest Kunz had no sooner taken his departure, than old Moritz of the mill made his appearance on the same business.

“ I am sorry, sir,” said he, “ to see you in this predicament, and more especially sorry that the accident happened under my roof.” But courage ! It is the fate

of war. I know you are too brave a man to dread the path that so many of your illustrious comrades have trod before you. Can I do anything for you, my dear friend?" Carl was so much amazed at the sight of Moritz in such a place, and at freedom, that he could not reply for some moments.

"Yes," said he, at length, recollecting himself; "you can tell the person, should you happen to see him, who was brought into the mill a prisoner, with Peter Schwarz, that I intend to keep my word just so long as I may consider it necessary for the purpose we talked of, and no longer." The next witness, to the still greater amazement of our adventurer, was Ishmael the Jew.

"It is the man," said he, after looking steadily at the prisoner for a moment: "behold, I am ready to lift up my voice against him in the courts of law."

"Wretched infidel," said Carl, indignantly, seeing him about to withdraw, "do you not even ask tidings of the fate of your mistress, whom you abandoned to my protection?"

"She is safe, and under the roof of my fathers, and has sent thee health and salutation; which I did not hasten to deliver, knowing that words are but breath, and that a woman's wishes turn not aside the axe of the guillotine."

"And this is all!"

"Even so."

"No more of this mummery!" cried Carl, striding to the door. "If I am to die, let not my last moments be thus tormented by fools and villains. I confess all that you wish to prove; I am he whom you have sought so long; and even now, at the very foot of the scaffold, I would not change places with that dastard Jew, or exchange for his the name of Schinderhannes, the Robber of the Rhine."

"Spoken like a brave man," said a French officer on guard. "I pledge my honour that you shall henceforward be treated with proper distinction; although, it concerns me to say, you must in the first place submit to be searched—a ceremony omitted before, in our ignorance of the real importance of our capture. The

guitar you will oblige me by accepting as a small token of my personal respect ; it will perhaps relieve the few tedious hours you may have still to pass before your execution. This small knife, which we reckon as an offensive weapon, must be deposited with the public authorities ; and this pencil-case, with your permission, I will myself preserve in remembrance of the donor. But how now ? A purse ! Gold, as I live and breathe!"

"The coined money is mine," interposed Ishmael eagerly, who still lingered at the door ; "for it was the property of the wife of my bosom, even the Gentile woman, Magdalene."

"It is partly true," said Carl, contemptuously ; "it belongs to Magdalene ; who, however, is not the wife, and I trust may soon cease to be the mistress, of this reptile Jew."

"But how came the lady's purse, Ishmael, into the pocket of Monsieur le Capitaine ?"

"He robbed her of it near unto the door of Kunz Weiner."

"It is false ! she entrusted it to my keeping."

"Monsieur le Capitaine is right ; 'entrust' is by far the genteeler word of the two. But what is it your pleasure, sir, that we should do with the money which this wayfaring woman *entrusted* to the keeping of a chief of banditti ? If you mean to claim the property, it must be paid into court, and the question of ownership brought to issue."

"It belongs to Magdalene ; let it be paid to her in person ; and take care that you do not entrust a single piece of it to the Jew, who has neither honesty nor any other quality of manliness in his composition. And now, for Heaven's sake, leave me to myself!"

"The worst company, my dear sir, you could have, under the circumstances. You are already provided with a guitar—shall I send you a priest ? No ? Very well : I dare say you are right, for there will hardly be time for both."

CHAPTER IX.

SHOWING HOW A JEW MAY ACT THE PART OF A CHRISTIAN.

In the course of the day the prisoner was officially informed that he would have the whole of the morrow to prepare for his trial, which would take place before a military commission summoned for the following day.

It was also intimated that, as nothing else would be required for his condemnation than the proof, already fully prepared, of his having been taken with arms in his hand, in an act of rebellion, he ought to make up his mind to be shot the instant the trial was over.

The solemnity of his meditation, after receiving this intelligence, was greatly disturbed by the various visits described in the last chapter. There seemed to be something so mysterious in the persons and circumstance surrounding him, that he sometimes inquired with a start, whether all were not a dream ? There was old Moritz, who but the night before had buried three or four servants of the government in a living grave, not only at large in the morning, but evidently trusted by the authorities. The same individual allowed himself to be made the tool of Schinderhannes, whose banditti had only been prevented from attempting to sack the mill by the intervention of the gendarmes, and whom he had intended, not a great many hours before, to punish, for what he termed ingratitude, by a violent death. As for Ishmael, he was at one and the same moment a witness for the police, and an agent of the robbers ; and in both characters, had laid aside instantaneously every quality of his mind which had made Carl grieve and wonder

that he was a Jew ; appearing, without even an attempt at disguise, a treacherous, ungrateful, cold-hearted villain. Could he come to any other conclusion than that Moritz—the bold, the sturdy, the hospitable—was bought by the bandit's gold ; that Magdalene, the beautiful and devoted, on reaching a safe harbour, had forgotten him who had saved her in the tempest ; and that Ishmael, the brave, haughty, and high-minded, was at bottom nothing else than—a Jew ? Whether young or old, however, fair or foul, good or bad, all were alike at the command of this strange Schinderhannes ; whose influence seemed to pervade the whole country, and poison the very atmosphere.

The day passed on in these reflections ; and every moment he sickened the more at the aspect presented by human nature. In vain, however, he endeavoured to raise his thoughts to a purer, higher world—his spirit clung shrieking to the earth.

“ I will not die !” he exclaimed—“ I cannot die yet ! Let me see her once more, were it but for an instant—let me tell her, were it only in a glance, that I never ceased to love her—that in dying, I lose not my life, but her !”

The night set in—shutting upon the world like a prison door ; and Carl threw himself upon his straw mattress, less from any hope of rest, than from the mechanical operation of the mind which associates going to bed with darkness. He lay till the middle watch, plunged in the same reflections that had filled his day-light hours. Sometimes he determined to reveal himself to his judges ; since the space by that time would have been quite long enough to have enabled Schinderhannes to reach his stronghold. But this idea was speedily abandoned. What purpose could the resolution serve ? He had not, it is true, resisted the police by force of arms till they had fired upon him : but where were his witnesses to prove the fact ? Magdalene had given up her very soul to Ishmael ; and Moritz was leagued with his enemies against him.

“ To struggle,” concluded he, “ would be vain ; and being so it would compromise my dignity. The commis-

sion would shoot me—however plain a story I might tell—on a much weaker chance of my being in reality the dreaded outlaw ; and I, however slight may be the probability of saving Ida by my death, will consent to perish on the chance. Be it so. Hunted into the toils, and sentenced to the death of a wild beast, I will die, like the wolf, in silence !”

This resolution taken, his mind was at rest ; such rest as that of the black waters of the ocean when the tempest is over, with dead men sinking into their depths, and shipwrecked navies floating on their bosom. Still it was rest. His eyes grew heavy ; the stir caused by relieving guard outside his door, which was done every half-hour, became more indistinct ; and at length he fell asleep.

In his dreams he imagined that he heard the cry of “ Help ! help !” shrieked in his ears without intermission. Sometimes the voice was Ida’s ; sometimes it grumbled, thunder-like, in the accents of Peter the Black ; and sometimes it arose from the depths of the vault, and from the lips of the captive gaoler. It was strange that Carl should have remembered in his sleep what he had utterly forgotten for the greater part of an entire day. The gaoler, whom it had been his intention to have immediately liberated, since neither his keys nor cord could be of any use, was still in durance. The hours of day-light that had not been taken up with visitors, had been crowded with the reflections which these gave rise to ; and it seemed as if he had not had time to think of this prisoner of a prisoner till he fell asleep.

The block of stone which covered the hole was so thick, and so nicely adjusted, and heaped round with earth, that it was no wonder a human voice had not been able before to make itself heard from the deep abyss. The floor, in fact the walls, the door, and every thing connected with the apartment, were on so massive a scale, that even the noise of changing guard on the landing-place could only be recognized by one unaccustomed to the sounds.

Carl was sorry for the poorman even in his sleep, and made haste to awake that he might relieve him. The

sound, however, changed as he raised himself up, and the supplication took another form.

"Carl Benzel!" was now the cry.

The first idea which crossed the mind of the sleeper awakened was of surprise that the gaoler should know his name; but this was banished the next moment by a conviction that the voice came from above rather than below; and turning up his head, he saw, with solemn wonder, a human head looking in through the bars of his prison window.

Carl remembered the loftiness of the tower, and the perpendicular descent of the rock; and he knew that, even supposing the existence of some natural inequalities in the one, and some breaches of time or war in the other, there was only one man living (as he firmly believed) who possessed the skill and nerve to scale such a height on so insecure a footing. If this midnight visiter was a living being—but of this he doubted—he was—he must be—

"Wolfenstein!" cried Carl, his thoughts breaking into speech as he approached the window.

"The same," said the baron; and the voice flashed a strange conviction on the mind of his friend. Wolfenstein was the stranger, and therefore the friend and emissary of Ida—Wolfenstein, who had always professed a much deeper attachment to Liese than that affected by mere gallantry, was also the sleeping guest of Kunz Weiner.

"I have risked my life to get speech of you," said the baron; "and now, as I said on a former occasion, listen without reply!

"You have saved the Dallheimer family, and done good service to Schinderhannes in an important crisis. The force that was closing in upon him from all the surrounding districts is already dissipated; and those who know the distracted state of the times will not readily imagine that it can be soon reassembled. He is willing in turn to save you; but in your present predicament this is no easy matter. One life he would not mind sacrificing; it is no more than you have forfeited for him, although from a selfish motive: but it is scarcely possible

to conceive how your deliverance can be effected otherwise than by force of arms. The balance, therefore, would be against you ; for in open combat he must calculate on losing much valuable blood."

" The question then seems to be how I can square accounts ? I have not a dollar in the world."

" But you have a sword."

" Do I understand the baron Wolfenstein aright ? Does he offer me my life on condition that I enrol myself in the ranks of banditti ?"

" You are unjust, Benzel ; what have I done to provoke your anger ?—swam the river on this cold, dark night, and climbed to your eyrie, at the hazard of my neck, by a path that no other man living would have dared but myself ? Understand me. I am commissioned to arrange the ransom of the Dallheimers, and your deliverance : if either of you object to the terms I am empowered to offer, why so—I have done.

" But stay, let me first explain this. Although your friend, and the friend of Ida Dallheimer, whom I once loved, I have a still stronger motive for wishing to save you both. I have sworn it—to her who is now my wife, and who is worthy to be so. Nor will you imagine—you who know me well—that the task is altogether destitute of charms for me. It is difficult, that is much—and dangerous ; it throws me into strange society, and odd and wild adventures ; and makes me sometimes imagine myself a hero of romance ! Was it nothing to be startled out of my bed at Kunz Weiner's by a shower of balls rattling against the windows—to blacken my face and attempt to escape from the mere instinct of imitation—and to be taken prisoner by the police, and carried handcuffed into your presence as a desperate bandit ? Was it nothing to be saved by the ingenuity of *my accomplices*—assisted a little by my own ; and to find myself dashing, like the Wild Huntsman, through a midnight wood, bound hand and foot to one of the most daring robbers unhung !"

" I know," said Carl, as his cheeks began to glow, and his eyes to sparkle, " that there are charms in such excitement. Your case was precisely the same as mine, only that I had no accomplices, as you call them, and

therefore failed in my attempt to escape. You must admit, however, that with me the affair has gone rather beyond a joke."

"That is as it may happen," replied the baron smiling.

"Suppose it happen that I throw off the mask at the trial?"

"It would be of no use: the testimony of Moritz, Kuntz Weiner, Ishmael, and a hundred others, would suffice, were it necessary, to hang you on a gallows as high as that of Haman."

"And why is Moritz so anxious to serve one who but last night planned an attack on his house?"

"He understands it as it was meant—an intended kindness, to relieve him (without inflicting serious injury save on a few panes of glass) from the suspicions of the police."

"And Ishmael——"

"He is a Jew, that is the worst that can be said of him. I hate Jews."

"And I abhor them."

"It is the Jews who have eaten up our inheritance; they are a plague-spot on the land, which it is the mission of Schinderhannes to wash out with blood."

"If the end sanctified the means, I know not who could blame. But to the point. You proposed, I think, that to save my life I should become the comrade of this renowned robber."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Wolfenstein, "by the Three Kings, this is amusing! A goodly election would he make indeed of one whom he never saw, and cannot know! He would entrust to an utter stranger the keeping of the lives of many hundred men! Why, what are you talking of?"

"Of what are *you* talking?" demanded Carl, reddening; "your words, I thought, at the time they were spoken, were even more plain than was consistent with my honour."

"Tut, tut, you are yet a boy. It was of serving I spoke, not companionship. There are many things in which your talents and courage might be of use; but it

could only be on ample trial that you would have any chance of being admitted into the band."

" You speak like an amateur. For me, I have no turn for robbing."

" Except as a chief ? Ha, Benzel ?"

" In any quality."

" And is this the answer I am to carry back to my employer ?"

" The final answer."

" Poor Ida !"

" What do you mean ?"

" S'death ! are you a man, and ask the question ? Have you not heard that in Schinderhannes there is a passion still more potent than the love of gold or power ? Why am I here ? Why is my peaceful mission to Mayence retarded at every step ? Why, in the midst of my errand to negotiate the ransom, am I compelled to undertake a task like this ? Are you a lover, and cannot tell ?" Carl groaned aloud.

" Ay, groan—and weep—and pray ! Another night past, and then all will be over. You will be in the peaceful grave ; and Ida——"

" Where ?"

" Still in the strong hold of the woman-worshipper, Schinderhannes."

" Speak, in a word. What does he offer ?"

" Your ransom, if there should go to it a thousand ounces of blood."

" My liberty ?"

" On certain conditions. You will reside in any district you please, but must hold yourself at his command every moment of your life, till your apprenticeship is finished. You may then either enter the band, or retire, at your pleasure. You will be made acquainted at the outset with the signals of the association ; and these you must obey on the instant. You must swear an oath of fidelity in terms which would make the boldest heart shudder with terror and dismay ; and, above all things, you must swear never to divulge to a human being the secret of your destiny. The penalty incurred

by any infringement, however slight, of your oath, is instant death."

"In any district that I please!" repeated Carl in the voice of one who dreams; while tears gushed through between the fingers with which he had covered his eyes. "But no—it is impossible—no, no, I will not, dare not think of it. Wolfenstein, when you see Ida Dallheimer, tell her that Carl Benzel——"

"Will not live to save her?"

"That Carl Benzel would save her, if he could do so with honour; but——"

"But being unable to do so with honour, he leaves her, with a thousand apologies, of course, to dishonour."

"Devil!"

"Lover!"

"Leave me, Wolfenstein."

"On one condition: that you do not decide till tomorrow afternoon. The Jew Ishmael will be here to receive your decision. If favourable to my proposal, place your hand upon your heart; if unfavourable, on your head; as a sign that the former will be true, or that the latter is lost."

"Agreed."

"But there is one thing I had almost forgotten. Know you anything of the gaoler?—or rather of the bunch of keys that used to hang at his girdle? Since the escape of your friend Peter the Black, he has never been heard of, and the whole neighbourhood is in an uproar about him. The general opinion is that, in an excess of zeal, having rushed out upon the walls, he tumbled headlong into the river, and was drowned; but this I doubt; the stream is too shallow and too rapid to detain its prize so long. All that I can ascertain is, that he is not without the precincts of the town—alive; and the natural inference must be, that living or dead, he is within the walls."

"He is alive," said Carl; who, even in the midst of his mental struggle could hardly forbear smiling—"he is alive and my prisoner. That great stone which you see in the middle of the floor—or perhaps which you can-

not see—covers the entrance to a vault, in which the unhappy gaoler, partly through design, and partly through forgetfulness on my part, has lain the whole day."

"Upon my word, Benzel, you will make a capital bandit. That is the best joke I have heard for a long time. Is the hole deep? There is a cord, if you require it. Down with you in an instant; and make your debut in robbing by taking his keys from him."

Carl, without any scruple of conscience, set about doing what he was ordered; and having removed the stone, and made fast one end of the rope to it, swung himself down into the pit.

"What are you about, good Lottchen?" said the goaler, in a faint voice. "It is not time yet for the keys. Bring me my breakfast, you jade, for I am as hungry as a lion. O Lord, what is this! Where are my keys? Help! Help! Rescue! Help!" Carl however, had climbed the rope before the goaler was well awake; and having thrown him down a portion of his dinner, which he had been unable to taste, he shut up the entrance again as before.

"This will facilitate matters," said Wolfenstein, "if you consent; but I beg you to understand that, without doing so, even if you made your escape unassisted, you would be given up instantaneously by the agents of Schinderhannes."

"Adieu," said his friend.

"*Au revoir,*" replied the baron, as his head disappeared from the window.

Carl listened for some time, till he heard a faint plunge in the river below; and he then returned to his uneasy couch, in which he sought every corner,

To find if sleep was there,—but sleep was not!

It would not be easy to describe by what process of reasoning, or by what sophistry of passion, he arrived at the conclusion which will be speedily apparent. It is probable, however, that the mental operation was far from being complicated. His death would leave Ida without a friend in the hands of a ruffian whose sensual

love of beauty was proverbial. This was the prospect presented on one side of the question ; but on the other —supposing his deliverance effected by special miracle, and without the intervention of Schinderhannes, of what service could his life be to her ? Without money, without influence, in the heart of a country where every second man appeared to be either the well wisher or the accomplice of the banditti, what could he do ? By what means would it even be possible for him to discover the place of her captivity ?

The alternative proposed to him by Wolfenstein was such as crimsoned his cheek with shame. No matter : in it there was hope. Connected with the association, even in the humbler grade that was offered him, he would be within the pale of its laws, by which he knew the chief himself was as firmly bound as the meanest apprentice. He would be near Ida ; by his voice alone he could protect her ; and even if all else was unavailing, and it became necessary to die, he would die in her defence.

But would not the profession, to which he attached himself for a time, convert him into an object of horror in her eyes ? No. The grand essential of apprenticeship was mystery. He would have abundant means of concealment ; and, if necessary, a hundred accomplices in the object. Again, if called upon to assist in any enterprise—and it was just possible that this might never be the case—instead of soiling his hands either with the blood or treasure even of Jews, might he not be able, under cover of his assumed character, to save rather than destroy ? The plan, in short, under various points of view appeared to be actually praiseworthy ;—and, with those whose knowledge of human character has not been acquired solely from the study of romances, it will be nothing derogatory to our adventurer to say that a *little* love of life lurked at the bottom of all.

It was hardly daybreak when the reflections of the prisoner were interrupted by a succession of visits, chiefly from priests and magistrates, for the purpose of extracting confession. In the midst of these petty annoyances the day wore on till dusk, and still the messenger of

Wolfenstein did not appear. It was then that the arguments by which Carl had persuaded himself of the propriety of the step, recurred, with double cogency. Bitterly did he regret the folly which had prompted him to refuse so cavalierly the offers of his well-meaning friend. It was vain to call to mind the footing on which they had parted. Wolfenstein, on cool reflection, had no doubt been satisfied that his repugnance was unconquerable ; and perhaps, by this time, had notified the failure of his mission to the haughty Schinderhannes.

In the midst of these agitating reflections the door of his cell was half opened, and then shut with a clang, and he heard once more the huge key turn in the lock.

This, that would have reminded another prisoner of the fall of the axe, made Carl's heart leap with joy. It convinced him that the agents of the mysterious bandit were at work ; and he awaited the entrance of Ishmael with confidence. Nor was he deceived ; for in less than half an hour, the Jew strode into the cell, followed by two functionaries of police. Carl laid his hand upon his heart and bowed.

"What is that mummery for?" said one of the officers to the other in surprise.

"Dog of a Christian!" cried Ishmael in a voice of thunder. "Thy newly born humility availeth not ; neither are thy signs recognized by just men. I am he whom thou hast despoiled of his property, and whom thou soughtest to despoil of the wife of his bosom. Ay, gaze ! Dost thou not know me ? I am the same whom but a little while ago thou didst condescend to hate and despise, and my errand now is to smite thee to the dust, and put my foot upon thy neck !

"Hearken ! The faithless servant of the law whom thou didst corrupt has been seized through *my* agency ; his keys are now at the girdle of Ishmael the son of Joab ; and, as the Lord liveth, if thou escape alive from this cell, I, even I myself, will take thy place, and abide the consequence to the block ! What ho ! seize him, chain him hand and foot, even like unto a beast of the forest taken in the toil of the hunters. There can be

no reason why, with strong iron at our command, a strong door to the cell, and strong walls engirdling the fortress, the strength of our men of war should be wasted in watchings.' The command was literally obeyed: the prisoner was thrown down and loaded with fetters, which the vindictive Jew locked with his own hand, with a small key that hung at his waist. Carl Benzel was then left to his meditations.

The noise and tumult of the scene, the personal violence that had been offered to him, and the suddenness with which the whole had been transacted, almost over-powered the remaining faculties of our adventurer ; and he was for some time in doubt as to the real character of Ishmael. The doubt soon by degrees faded away. The heat of the new gaoler was evidently assumed ; his accusation connected with Magdalene was absurd ; and the charge of corruption was evidently meant only for the ears of his attendants. As the night, however, came down in thick darkness, and the deep-mouthed bell of the prison muttered hour after hour with its portentous voice, till a single solitary clang proclaimed that the world had entered into a new subdivision of mortal time, he became uneasy, and then agitated.

It was the day of his trial. His flesh crept at the idea ; and turning a look of desperation towards the window, he watched for the first glimmering of the dawn, which should be to him the signal of death. The window was barely distinguishable from the dead gloom of the rest of the apartment ; yet he was aware of a shadow that passed across it. The motion of garments next met his ear ; and he knew—he felt, but how he could not tell, that a human figure stood tall and silent by his side. A superstitious dread began to gather on the mind of the prisoner, and he shrunk with absolute terror as he heard a whisper close to his ear.

“ Awake ! Behold, the day of freedom hath dawned.”
“ Ishmael !”

“ Even Ishmael the son of Joab. Stir not : let me unlock the fetters. There, thou art free.”

“ To the door then, give me your hand.”

“ Yet another moment. Strip off thy coat and hat,

and take mine in exchange ; and now wrap this cloak round thy head and shoulders, and so farewell !”

“ What—farewell ? Here ! Will you not fly with me ?”

“ It is impossible. At the bottom of the stairs thou wilt find one who will lead thee to a place of rest ; and as soon as it is day-light thou mayest leave the fortress in this disguise.”

“ But let me understand : you remain here in my place ?”

“ We cannot both pass the guards of the wicket,” replied Ishmael, calmly, “ and therefore one of us must perforse remain behind.”

“ And what will become of *you*. ”

“ I shall run no risk of being shot. I shall be transferred to the ordinary tribunals, where such crimes as this are tried ; and, if I cannot find the means of escape, shall suffer death by the guillotine.”

“ And why in the name of God, do you run this risk for a stranger ?”

“ Not for a stranger,” said the Jew softening ; “ I only pay a debt which I owe thee for the life of Magdalene. But the time fieth, and the light of the dawn will soon come forth from the chambers of the east. Get thee gone, Christian ; and if it shall so come to pass that thou canst not be ransomed but with life for life, think of her who hath lost a husband for thy sake.”

“ Noble heart !” cried Carl, speaking involuntarily to himself ; “ and can this man be a robber and a Jew ?”

“ I am of the people,” replied Ishmael, “ among whom my mother brought me forth, and I follow the ancient faith of my fathers. My profession, of whatsoever nature it be, I owe also to circumstances beyond my controul. Were I even a robber, I am yet a man ; and, while plunged in what the laws of society denominate crime, I may yet possess all the purer and higher feelings of humæ nature. Which of the men of peace perform not actions every morning of their lives more heinous in the eyes of God than open robbery ? Cannot a robber serve his friend ? Cannot a robber give alms ?

Cannot a robber love ? Ay, cannot a robber pray ?* If men were withheld from making their approaches to heaven by the consciousness of guilt, what a world would this be !

"But the time fieth : get thee gone, Christian—and if ever it shall come to pass that thou becomest a robber, fling not away thy soul on the false idea that thou hast ceased to be a man!"

"My decision is taken," said Carl ; "no man shall perish for me. Away ! I will not have your blood upon my head."

"What, will not one victim satisfy thee ? It was thy desire to have been rescued by open force, where *many* would doubtless have perished, both of friends and foes. Thy refusal now to be saved proceedeth from no healthy determination, but from the sickly, savourless affectation which men call sentiment."

"You are wrong, Ishmael ; my refusal proceeds from reflection, which you yourself have forced upon me. My former desire of life arose from mere selfishness and want of thought."

"It is a pity," exclaimed the Jew, crossing his hands upon his breast ; "then Magdalene will have no friend on the earth!"

"No friend ! Fly, incomprehensive man ! and, since you *can* pass the wicket, waste no more thought upon one who is already numbered with the dead."

"I have undertaken," said the Jew, speaking clearly and distinctly, "to deliver thee ; I have wilfully put a stop to all other projects by which thy life might have been saved ; and if I leave this house of bondage without being able to say unto the master whom I serve 'Lo, it is done,' I shall surely die."

Carl Benzel, after a brief struggle, wrapped the cloak round him ; and then, grasping the hand of Ishmael said, in a voice of which he endeavoured in vain to conceal the tremor—

* In some of the associations described in the note at the end of the volume, it was the uniform practice of the banditti to recite prayers over the bodies of those they murdered, before hiding them in the earth.

"I go then, noble Ishmael! but, as the Lord lives, I will save you in turn, or perish. Till we meet again, think that Magdalene has a brother." He pressed convulsively the hand which trembled within his like a woman's; he retreated a step, then returned; then suddenly opened his arms, and the Jew and Christian throwing themselves on one another's necks, in the language of scripture, "lifted up their voice and wept."

Carl having locked the door behind him, descended the stairs and gained the court.

"What, Ishmael!" cried a sentry, stepping up to him in alarm. "What means this? You must——"

"At last!" cried Magdalene shrilly, who had stood watching in concealment near the entrance; "do you think I will permit you to kill yourself with this over anxiety?" and she seized him by the cloak, and drew him away. "Nay, if you struggle," continued she, laughing, "I must use force; do, good soldier, assist me to get my husband to bed, for he has not slept one wink since these fatal keys came into his possession."

"It is not permitted," said the man gruffly, and following close at their heels, "even for the gaoler to be in the court before sunrise without showing proper cause. You must wait in the guard-room till the commandant can be spoken with."

"Go, you fool!" cried Magdalene, in a shrewish voice, as she thrust Carl away before her: "you are always offending the best natured people by your perversity, and obliging me to get you out of the scrape."

"Hush!" continued she, pinching the arm of the soldier, "he is only a fool; and, between you and me, something still more disagreeable. You did not observe me looking at you while they were changing guard? Not a word now. After day-break he goes into the town on business, and I shall see him a little way past the wicket. If I find you standing at the corner when I return, how can I help it?"

"You are a divinity, by ——" said the soldier; "and, for the matter of that, I thought you did look at me. But how is it possible for me at such a time to overlook——"

"That will do—speak a little gruffer, or he will suspect. There, now all is arranged. You will not disappoint me?" and when the sentry attempted to speak again, she stopped his mouth with her lips, and turning round, flew after her husband.

She led him by the hand into a comfortable room which had belonged to the former gaoler, and bolted the door.

"This is as it should be," said she, as she sat down exhausted. "Ishmael has shown himself worthy of my love, which I feared he was not, and I am happy."

"Happy, Magdalene!"

"Ay, happy. He will die an honourable death, and what more can his wife look for? But no more words. Rest—sleep if you can; for you have a long journey before you;" and wrapping a shawl round her head, she leaned back in the chair, and but for the trembling of her hands, and the convulsive heaving of her breast, might have seemed to be asleep.

When the day had broke, and the hour was announced by a musket-shot, she started upon her feet, hastily arranged her dress, and taking the arm of our adventurer, led him out to the wicket.

"Qui vive?" shouted a voice from the porter's lodge.

"France," whispered Magdalene.

"France!" replied Benzel.

"What, Ishmael, and so early! Come in, and let us see your Israelitish face by the lamp."

"It is all right," said the soldier, who had for some time been lingering impatiently near the spot, with Magdalene's kiss burning on his lips. "Make haste, he is on public business."

"Nay, if he is on business, then to be sure we must make haste. Zounds, man! are you afraid of taking cold, that you wrap yourself up so carefully?" Carl began to speak, but interrupted himself with a fit of hoarse coughing.

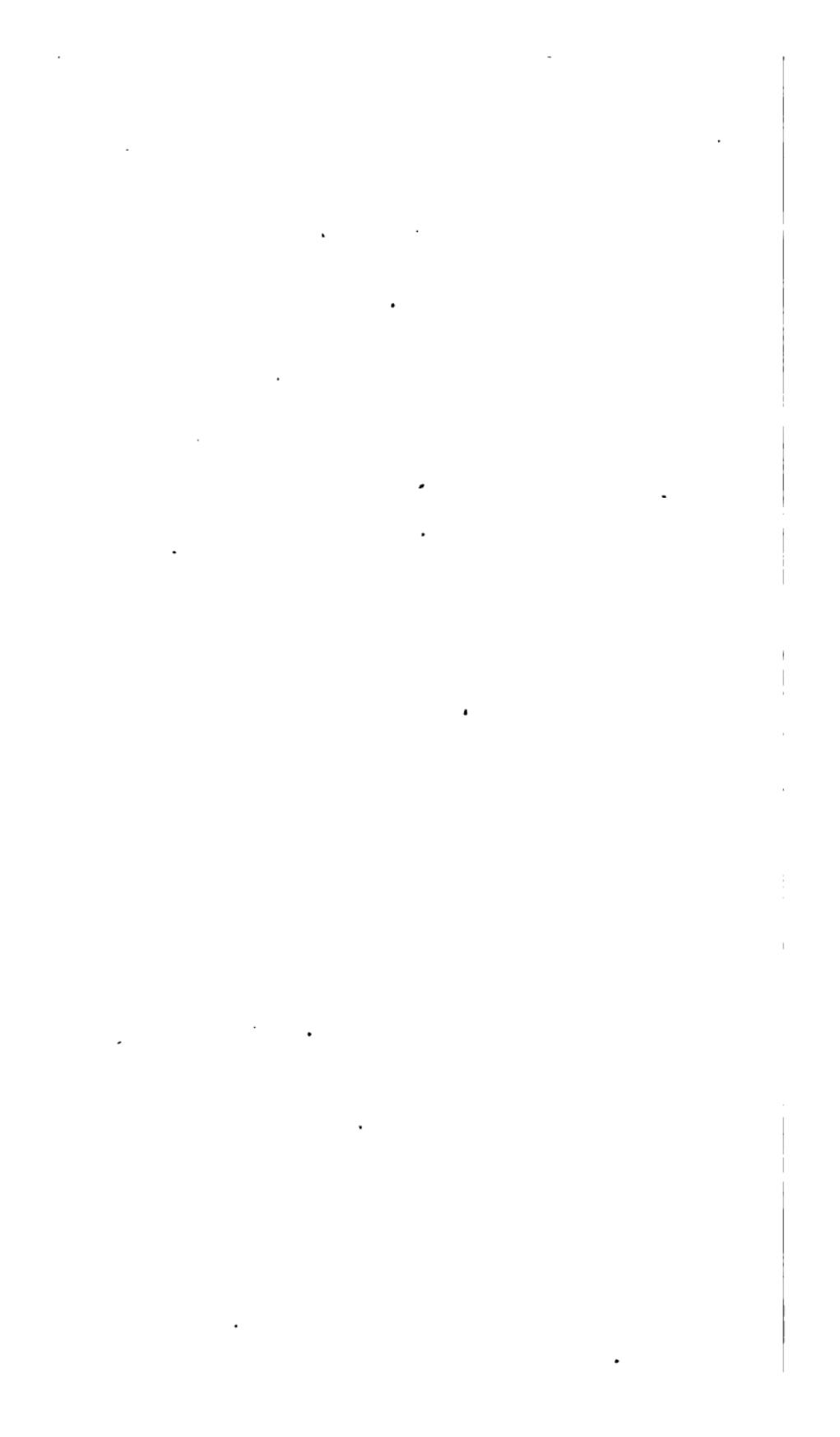
"This comes of your rambles!" said Magdalene, laughing.

"Well, for certain," remarked the porter, as he turn-

ed the key slowly in the lock, “I thought he had a cold, his voice sounding, as it were, disguised. Good morning, master gaoler-substitute; be sure you bring us news of the commission. Good morning, madame.”

“Good morning both,” said the soldier. “If madame only wishes,” he added, “to convoy her husband a little way, I would advise her not to go far, as the comrades of Schinderhannes are, no doubt, prowling about the cage where their chief is shut up.”

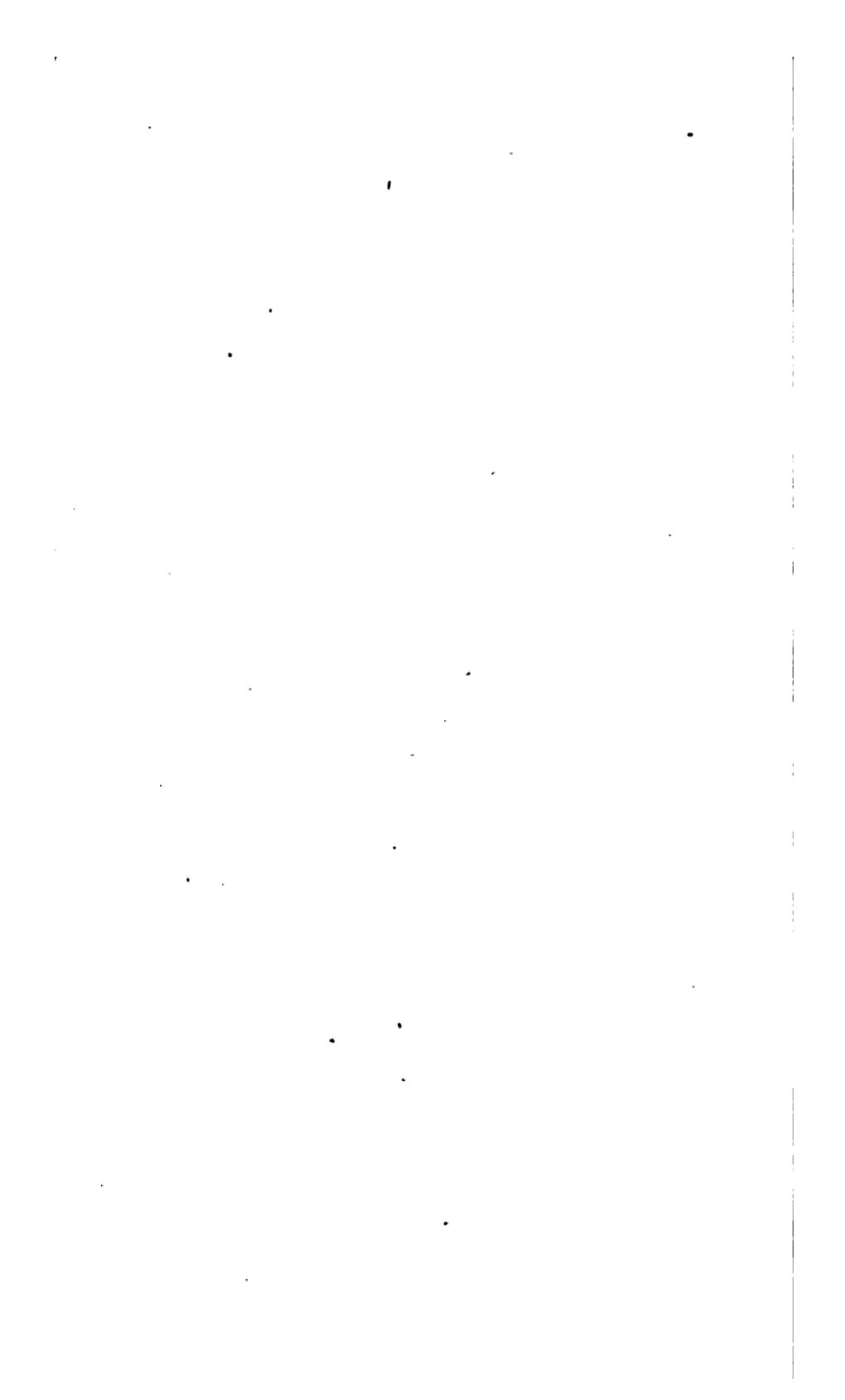
“Trust me!” replied she, “I only step out for a minute; I have not even locked the door of our room, and who knows whether *somebody* may not go in while I am absent?” The door was opened and shut. The porter crept back into his lodge; the soldier stole, like a guilty spirit, to the apartment of his expected mistress; and Magdalene and Carl Benzel, forsaking the road when they had passed Birkenfeld, crossed the open country towards the east, and plunged into a forest which stretches away in the direction of Oversteine.



SCHINDERHANNES,

THE ROBBER OF THE RHINE.

BOOK II.



SCHINDERHANNES,

THE ROBBER OF THE RHINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAVELS OF IDA.

THE art of subdividing a work into *books* is a very valuable one. *Volumes* by no means answer the same purpose; for every author, or at least every bookseller, knows that to conclude even a portion of the narrative at the end of any volume but the last is death to the speculation. A work labouring under this misfortune is known at a glance, by the circumstance of a single volume—in all probability the first—presenting every appearance of extensive circulation, while the rest are as clean and pure as if they had never entered this dirty world at all. A *book* is another thing. Occurring, as it may, and doth in the instance now before the reader's eyes, in the middle of a volume, it is like a landing-place in a stair of more than one flight, on which the upward-bound may pause for a minute to breathe, and, curse by his gods the steepness of the last, or look forward with hope to the easier ascent of the next. He cannot throw down the *book* as he would a volume. Peradventure the work hath been borrowed from a circulating library, and *must* therefore be read through, or the money lost. At all events, he must be a reader wofully deficient in courage

and endurance who would stop in the middle of a volume.

In the present case the break enables us to turn back our eyes—following the rebellious glances of the reader to the very commencement of the story ; and affords us a fair opportunity of endeavouring to beguile his discontent by seducing his thoughts into another channel, although running parallel, as we confess it does, with the former, and both destined to meet at last.

When Carl Benzel, after his fantastic duel with Wolfenstein (characteristic, we are sorry to say, of the follies of a similar kind still practised in Germany), was rushing in desperation along the road, he saw a handkerchief, it may be remembered, waved to him from a carriage. This he afterwards concluded to be a signal from Ida—and he was right. After the handkerchief had been withdrawn, and her eyes had fallen beneath the keen, cold glance of her mother, the young lady began to ask herself for what purpose she had been guilty of the indecorum. When Carl had left her a rejected and disconsolate maiden at the window—for she had not strength for some moments to retire, although she shut the sash—there entered into her feelings more of bitterness than she had ever felt before. She could have married Wolfenstein, could it have been done on the instant, without a sigh ; or she could have taken the vows of a nun, could they have been concentrated into a single word, without a tear.

But when, after some time, she saw all things prepared for the road, and knew that her late interview with Carl had been the *last*, “a change came o'er the spirit of her dream,” that was not exaggerated in the description of Liese.—“Her face was flushed, and her step quick and resolute ; but when she observed the preparations for the journey, she became as pale as marble, and seemed ready to faint.” The extreme suddenness of the change, be it remarked, only existed in its external phenomena ; for all men—and women too—are accustomed to keep up their anger through a kind of obstinacy, long after every natural prop has melted away from under it.

In the carriage her ideas whirled as rapidly as the spokes of the wheels ; and like them they all revolved round a common centre. Before she had journeyed a thousand yards, Carl was acquitted of the charge of infidelity; but found guilty of the minor offence of mystery. It is true she had not asked him to explain his conduct ; but there could be no doubt that it was his bounden duty to have broken her windows, if necessary to the explanation reaching her ears, rather than have retired under circumstances so equivocal. At all events she saw no possibility of *her* making the first advance. She would die, if such consummation was requisite, but "make no sign."

Just at that moment Carl Benzel passed : and Ida Dallheimer waved her handkerchief.

Much might be said on this text. We shall content ourselves, however, with stating the simple fact, that Ida had no motive for the action at all. She did not know that she had done it till rebuked by her mother's eyes : she did not feel that she had done wrong till she felt her cheeks tingle with a blush. Being done, however, it was very well. The consciousness of being "fully committed" eases the mind ; which is the reason, by the way, why love (of another kind from Ida's) is never so secure from detection as when it has turned into crime. Having actually made the first advance, it was her business to prove to herself that Carl had deserved it ; and she had now leisure of mind and self-possession enough for the task.

We shall not burthen the narrative with the proceedings of the case, in which her judgment catechised her heart—somewhat in the style of a saucy barrister attempting to browbeat a confident witness—but come at once to the result ; which the reader will perceive was not *very* wide of the truth.

Her lover, she concluded, was ruined, and by his own folly ; and his reluctance to accept, so suddenly, of her sweet self, arose from his generosity.

This being settled, she determined, lest her telegraph should have been unseen or misinterpreted, to have recourse to the more intelligible signs of the alphabet.

She accordingly watched her opportunity; and, when her mother's head was turned another way, dashed down a single line on the blank leaf of a book; which she then tore out, and flung from the window of the carriage into the road; resolving, for fear of accidents, to send a duplicate by post as soon as they arrived at Trèves.

On reaching this city, at length, Madame Dallheimer drove to an inn, her own house being altogether unprepared for her reception, as she had not had time to give the person in charge of it any warning of the intended visit. Here, to her great surprise, and, it may be added, to her great joy, the party fell in with the baron Wolfenstein, who had just stopped to change horses on his way to Mayence.

This baron Wolfenstein, like many other men of fortune, had, for some years past, spent a good deal of his time in Aix-la-Chapelle; where, in consequence of his intimacy with Benzel, he was introduced to the Dallheimer family. As Benzel sunk in the prudent mother's estimation, Wolfenstein rose. They were both, it is true, publicly known to be addicted to the same follies; but, owing to certain circumstances, what might be overlooked, or laughed at, in the one, was quite unpardonable in the other.

She knew Benzel's fortune to a shilling; she could count his lands acre by acre; and she was well aware that such a rental could not stand long the demands of his extravagance. Wolfenstein, on the other hand, although from a distant part of the country, and wholly unknown at Aix-la-Chapelle, was undoubtedly rich; neither riotous living, nor even losses at play, seeming to have any permanent effect upon his resources. If one visit to the city terminated in his being "cleaned out," he would laughingly take leave of his acquaintances, telling them that he must live upon sour krout and small ale till the next. But at the next he seemed to have waxed wonderfully upon the lean fare. He sported a new equipage, and new ornaments; and began to dash more brilliantly than ever. Wolfenstein, besides, was a baron, and although this is no great thing in Ger-

many, it is better than nothing. Benzel was not even a baron ; his ancestors could not be traced further back than the memory of one's grandmother ; and there were indeed some suspicions afloat, that the moderate fortune of his family was acquired by trade. In every point of view, the baron was a desirable match for her daughter ; while it was horror to think of the dissipated and ruined Benzel as a son-in-law.

Madame Dallheimer was a clever woman, and fond of intrigue ; and she no sooner found, therefore, that Wolstenstein was worth having, than she put all her art in play to catch him. The baron rushed blindly into the snare; he was captivated at once with the beauty of Ida ; talked love and raptures ; and seemed every day on the point of a matrimonial declaration. This, however, did not come. He had the delicacy to sound Ida on the subject before speaking to her mother ; and convinced from his reception either that his case was hopeless, or at least that hurrying matters would do him no good, he remained, up to the moment at which we now meet him, in such apparent vacillation, that Madame Dallheimer was ready to lose the usual smoothness of her temper with vexation.

When meeting him now, how bitterly did she regret her *too* fine policy in quitting Aix-la-Chapelle without taking leave ! The journey over the Eifel, had they travelled together, she was absolutely certain, would have been conclusive ; even Ida would have begun the habit of looking upon him as a guide and protector ; and by this time, instead of brooding gloomily, as she evidently was, over her love and her despair, she would have been listening silently, if not cheerfully, to the wild, untaught, but brilliant rattle of the baron.

On his part Wolstenstein was overwhelmed with sorrow that affairs of urgency required his immediate presence at Mayence. How delighted he would have been, he said, to have been able to spend even a week at Tréves, and thus to have an opportunity of enjoying the society of Madame Dallheimer and her amiable daughter ! But a time would come, he doubted not, and that speedily, when he might be permitted to hope for

the happiness. Indeed he wished—what harm was there in wishing?—as the next best thing to his having it in his power to remain at Trèves, that the fair travellers were going on to Mayence! There were persons there whom he was to meet on business, who were intimately acquainted with his family and fortune—and he desired of all things—he—he—. The baron stopped abruptly, cast down his eyes in confusion, and heaved a deep sigh.

Madame Dallheimer was almost breathless. “We will go with you!” was about to break from her lips; but the tact of the woman of the world triumphed; and she contented herself with pressing his hand affectionately, and assuring him that both she and Ida would wait with impatience till they saw him again.

In fine, the baron took his leave.

The next morning, Madame Dallheimer was waited upon by the master of the inn; who, with a thousand apologies, informed her, that, being aware she had a house in the town, he had expected the honour of her company only for one night, and had given her a chamber that had already been engaged for a traveller, who was now expected every moment.

“Give him another, then,” replied Madame Dallheimer quickly.

“But consider, Madame, he has taken it for several weeks; and besides, he is a young gentleman of luxurious habits, who will not be satisfied with any thing short of the best chamber I have in the house.”

“Whence is he?”

“From Aix-la-Chapelle.”

“His name?”

“Benzel.”

“Benzel, what Benzel?”

“Madame, I do not know.”

“How far is Baron Wolfenstein gone by this time?”

“To the village of Hermeskeil, where he will halt till to-morrow morning, being engaged in the purchase of some lands.”

“Order my horses. Send to stop preparations at the house. Come Ida, make haste, make haste!” In

two hours the travellers were winding up the heights of the Hohe-Wald.

Ida, notwithstanding the fineness of the weather, and the novelty of the journey, remained plunged in so deep a reverie, that her mother, in order to divert her mind, took pains every now and then to point out to her the objects in the scenery most worthy of attention ; and sometimes even insisted on their dismounting from the carriage to examine them more closely. Her efforts, however, were unavailing. Ida knew that this second journey destroyed all probability of her seeing Benzel soon ; and, unsupported by his presence, she dreaded the series of persecution to which she was well aware she would be exposed at Mayence. The distance between this town and Aix-la-Chapelle was so great that she even feared the inadequacy of her lover's funds to carry him so far; and although, only a few days before, her frank and open heart would no more have shrunk from offering him a supply of money than her lips would have recoiled from his kisses, it was now impossible to think of such a step before receiving a formal explanation of his conduct.

As yet, however, nothing like despair mingled with her disappointment ; and she might be said, indeed, to be rather embarrassed than seriously unhappy. Her lover, as we have seen, was already honourably acquitted of infidelity : and for the minor offence, of which he was but too surely guilty, she had made up her mind to discharge him from the bar—on paying the fees.

It was late in the afternoon before the travellers had crossed the mountain ; and as they were now within a short drive of Hermeskeil, they made no scruple of lingering for some time longer to enjoy the spectacle of the sun sinking behind the ridges of the Hohe-Wald.

"Look, mother!" cried Ida, in a tone of terror, as they began to proceed ; "see the horseman in the distance, with what headlong speed he is spurring towards us ! If he should be a highwayman !"

"We are four to one, love, against him," said Madame Dallheimer calmly ; "and these are not the days

of chivalry, when a single knight could rout a squadron." The horseman neared them while they were yet speaking, and swept by the carriage like the wind, the belly of his steed covered with gore. Notwithstanding his haste, however, he made a gesture of warning as he passed ; and shouted some words, of which only, " Fly!" and " Banditti " could be heard distinctly.

It may be supposed that the travellers were not altogether at ease when this apparition had vanished. Madame Dallheimer, however, did not lose her self-possession.

" To turn back," cried she, " is impossible ; our horses would never reach the summit of the Hohe-Wald. Our outriders, therefore, must advance to the front, and put as good a face upon the matter as they can." But although she spoke in this manner to her party, madame, who was accustomed to reason on much less important cases, was seriously alarmed.

The fugitive, from the momentary glimpse she had been able to catch of him, appeared to her to be a stout, able man, well armed and mounted, and by no means one, therefore, who would be likely to fly from any slight or uncertain danger. He must have seen, while approaching them, the strength of the escort, and the respectability of the equipage ; and instead of riding his horse to death would no doubt have halted and joined forces, had not the " banditti " of whom he spoke been still more numerous.

Just at the moment when these ideas passed through her mind, a view was obtained, although only for an instant, of a distant part of the road, which was crowded with men on foot ; and the travellers saw that it was full time to fix upon some plan of operations.

" It is needless," said Madame Dallheimer, seeing the horsemen unsling their carbines ; " if these are banditti, they must be armed as well as you, and you would all be picked off your saddles before you could fire a second shot. Stop, postillion, and let us descend. Shut up the carriage, as if it were on its return from a journey without its owner, and my daughter and I will conceal ourselves in yonder little oratory near the road.

side. If you are asked for your arms and money, deliver them up without a word. Take the carriage on to a reasonable distance, and when you think it probable that the robbers may have passed, come back for us." These orders were given by the courageous lady without a faltering of the voice ; and in a few minutes, Ida and she found themselves kneeling side by side in the oratory, although more from policy than devotion, and the carriage drove off.

The road at this place was hemmed in between a ridge of cliff on one side, and a river on the other ; the oratory being perched among the rocks, about half way up, and approached by means of a staircase roughly hewn out of the solid stone. Even from this elevated site, however, it was impossible to see distinctly more than two or three hundred yards of the highway; and Madame Dallheimer thought within herself that there could not be a more convenient field for robbery. They waited for some time in the most intense anxiety. The carriage was out of sight ; and as the sound of the wheels died away upon their ear, they felt as if they had bade adieu to their last friend.

The crowd they had seen on the road was evidently in motion, and approaching them. Had it consisted of persons flying from banditti, they must long ere now have reached the spot ; and besides, their number made this idea preposterous. The conclusion therefore was, if any reliance could be placed on the warning of the fugitive horseman, that they were the banditti themselves ; and it may be imagined with what interest the pretended devotees beheld them turn the corner of the rock, and enter the short and narrow area commanded by the oratory.

To the great relief of both mother and daughter, they proved to be Jews, to the number of forty or fifty, returning, as the burthens of some appeared to indicate, from a fair. Still there was something peculiar in their progressive motion. They walked with an air of constraint, frequently turning their heads half-way round, as if they wished to look back, but durst not ; and

making as much haste while they walked as it was possible to do without appearing to run.

"All is not right," thought Madame Dallheimer; but the next moment she almost screamed with joy, as she saw slowly following the Jews, a figure which she imagined to be that of the baron Wolfenstein. Alas! she was instantly undeceived. The air, dress, and even shape, were different; and presently she saw the stranger's face was as black as a negro's. When he fairly entered the pass, he halted, leaning languidly on a carbine which he carried in his hand.

When the Jews had proceeded as far as the oratory they stopped on a sudden, and hung back in extreme terror, pressing one upon the other like a flock of sheep between two dogs. The cause of this movement was an individual now seen advancing in front, whose appearance formed a strange contrast with that of the one in their rear. He was tall, huge, and ill-formed, with clouds of black locks overflowing his shoulders, and an immense beard of the same colour reaching to his girdle. The latter "commodity of hair" appeared to stand instead of a waistcoat, but only indifferently well: for here and there a palm's breadth of skin, resembling tanned leather, betrayed the absence of linen. This uncouth figure, armed with a pistol in each hand, while he held a long knife by the blade between his teeth, came boundingly forward in something between a roll and a run, bellowing forth some words at the same time, which could scarcely be distinguished from the roar of a wild beast.

"Well rascals," shouted he, as he approached nearer, "is it a peace-offering or a blood-offering we are to have to-day? Down upon your marrow-bones, ye unbelieving dogs—down!" The Jews all sunk upon their knees at the word of command; and the robber, after gazing upon them for some time, in apparent discontent that he had met with no resistance, signified by a kick to one whom he selected that he must get up.

"Go," said he, "and deliver to my comrade every thing in gold or silver that is about your person; and

then return to me, to suffer death if I find that you have withheld the value of the smallest coin!"

"Oh, my lord, have mercy!"—cried the Jew, half rising : "have mercy on the miserable father of ten hungry children!"

"I have twelve, my lord!" said his neighbour, weeping aloud.

"Unconscionable villains!"

"Have pity on the poor wanderers!" ejaculated the rest, "Have pity on the beggar children of Israel! We do not know thee, my lord; the light of thy countenance never shone on the path of thy servants before; and our eyes are so blinded with weeping, that we shall not know thee again. Mercy, sweet stranger, mercy, kind Christian!"

"Not know *me*! Never saw *my* face before!—Thunder and lightning!—then I must give you something to sharpen your memories."

"Not know *thee*! Accursed be he who spake the word! It was not I—nor I—nor I—nor I. Have mercy, my lord Peter, for we know thee well!"

"Good master Schwarz."

"Valiant master Peter Schwarz!"

"Avant, ye anti-Christian knaves! Not know *me*! Thunder and furies! Away, sirrah, and do my bidding—or by the Eternal!—"

"Alas, alas! oh! oh! oh! ah! ah! ah!" and the Jews remained kneeling, beating their breasts and pulling their hair. Peter's teeth began to grind, his eyes to glare, and the white foam to gather about his lips. The victims took the hint, and rising one by one, crept slowly and unwillingly towards the knight of the black countenance, who had remained in the same attitude, looking on the scene like an indifferent spectator.

To him they delivered their purses, which, in many cases, were heavy with money; and the booty became at last so troublesome, that the robber gave his carbine to one of them to hold while he completed the transaction! When all had gone through this purgation, they took their leave, and began to resume their journey.

"Not know *me*!" shouted Peter the Black, as they passed him. "Stand, villains, and pull off your shoes and stockings, that we may see whether you have not something left to make amends for the insult." The Jews obeyed trembling and groaning ; and the robber reaped so rich a harvest by his ingenuity, that the cloud departed from his brow, and leaping suddenly in among them, he gathered their shoes and stockings into a heap and desired each to find *his* own.

The scene that ensued is indescribable. The boots were the objects of the first fight ; for there was not one present who did not rebut with blows and curses the charge of having worn shoes. The shoes then became the prize of the contest, and lastly the stockings. From forty to fifty men who had just suffered themselves to be plundered of valuable property by two robbers, fought fiercely with one another for their old shoes ; and when at length every one was fitted, the weakest of course with the worst article, they left the ground covered with blood and handfuls of hair.

Peter the Black remained standing in the same position with his face turned towards the rocks, for some time after the Jews disappeared ; and Madame Dallheimer and her daughter became gradually convinced that his eyes, beaming with a vague and stupid fierceness, like those of a bullock, were fixed upon their retreat. There was a fascination in the gaze which neither of the ladies could resist ; they would fain have retired to a corner of the oratory to conceal themselves ; but in spite of their terror they remained peeping at the door, unable to withdraw their heads.

A ghastly smile at length broke upon the stolid features of Peter Schwarz ; and, extending his hand, he beckoned them to come down. They obeyed without a word.

Before they regained the road, Peter had begun to move, with great strides, towards the place where his comrade had stood (who disappeared during the mêlée of the tribes) ; and the ladies, who followed almost unconsciously, were at length forced to run in order to keep up with him. On arriving at a narrow opening in the rocks, resembling the dry bed of a torrent, he turned

round, and again beckoned, with the same strange contortion of countenance, which he no doubt meant for a smile ; and clambering among the loose stones of the chasm, was soon at the summit of the pass. Ida and her mother followed the painful route more slowly, and without exchanging words ; but on reaching the end, they found the passage barred by a perpendicular cliff at least seven feet high, on the ridge of which stood their conductor.

Ida could not help thinking at the moment of the popular legends of her country ; and as she gazed upwards at the gigantic form of Peter Schwarz, likened him to some demon of the rock, whose business and delight it was to lead the traveller to destruction. Her mother, who was unaccustomed to dream, only busied herself with calculating the amount of the ransom that might be required by the outlaws ; turning every now and then an anxious glance upon the beauty of her lovely daughter, which she knew would greatly enhance the price of their deliverance.

" Give me your arm, young woman," said Peter, stretching down his brawny arm, on which the muscles, on the uncovered part, were seen twisted and knotted round the bone like whipcord.

" Mine first, if you please !" cried the mother.

" Thousand devils ! what is it to me ? Come along, you old bag !" and seizing her hand, he swung her up several feet above the surface of the rock, landing her on her feet with a force that made her feel as if her heart had leaped into her mouth. Ida's ascent was managed more delicately, but still not without some concussion of the same organ—one that is always in the way with young ladies.

" I did not hurt you ?" said Peter, in a growl of wonderful softness—" Pshaw ! there was no water there—I could not have hurt her. Come along. If I had drowned her—how she would have squalled ! Help ! help ! help !—he ! he ! he ! Come along, I say. Thunder and lightning ! it is all the mother's fault ! Hark ye, woman—" and he turned fiercely round to Madame Dallheimer—" would you marry your daughter to a man

whom she could not love ? Answer me that—if he was rolling in wealth—answer me that !”

“ I would do what I considered was for her good,” said Madame Dallheimer, somewhat disconcerted.

“ And you would consider *that* for her good ? Bawd ! bawd ! and supposing her husband found out that it was a prostitute you had sent into his bed—a prostitute of the *heart*, which is the worst denomination,—what would you think if he *drowned her* ? Answer me that—would you not be surprised ? Ho ! ho ! ho !” and Peter Schwarz began to move with such immense strides, that very soon he was only seen by the two ladies like a landmark in the distance.

The shades of evening were now stealing around them ! the road—if it was deserving that name at all—was so rude and uneven, that Madame Dallheimer began to fear she could go no further. Just as she arrived at this point, however, they found themselves within a hundred paces of a farm-house.

The house, like many others in this part of the country, was built among the wrecks of an ancient chateau ; the remaining apartments of which served for stables and other outhouses. The walls of the chateau—beneath which the farm was built—rose vast and lofty above the roof of the latter ; although it was manifest that the interior of the building was an utter ruin. The whole picture had at once an air of grandeur and desolation ; and it touched the fancy of the younger lady so much, that she hardly remembered the cause of her visit.

When they entered the farm-house alone—as Peter the Black, having merely pointed to the door, retired—they were received with great civility by the inmates, who appeared to be in no respect different from other persons of the same class. An excellent, and indeed somewhat fastidious supper was then set before them, including wine, which Madame Dallheimer knew to be worth an English guinea the bottle ; and when they signified a wish to retire for the night—not a syllable having passed on either side relative to the nature of their

visit—they were shown into one of the most comfortable bed-rooms they had ever slept in in their lives.

The way which led to it, indeed, was singularly long and intricate ; in the course of which they had to pass through an open court, and enter what appeared to be a part of the ruins. They were too weary, however, to be very critical ; and they were scarcely well in bed, after having bolted themselves securely in, when, instead of entering into a discourse upon their adventures, they fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING HOW SOCIETY CREATES ROGUES IN ORDER TO HANG THEM.

It was late in the morning before Madame Dallheimer and her daughter awoke ; and when they did so, they could hardly imagine, for some time, that the events of the preceding day had been anything more than a dream. The apartment was quite as comfortable as a bed-room in an inn of the second class, and a smaller chamber adjoining afforded them every convenience for the toilet. The windows were not barred ; nor, in short, was there apparently the slightest circumstance which could give rise to the suspicion that they were prisoners in the stronghold of a robber.

Soon after they were up, breakfast was brought to them by the girl who had served supper the evening before. She was a coarse, vulgar, country wench, but simple and good-natured, and, as it seemed, without the remotest idea that she was made a party in any illegal transaction.

“ Are we at liberty to resume our journey ? ” asked Madame Dallheimer, half tempted to believe that there was some mistake.

"Madame?" said the girl, staring—"Oh no, certainly not, without the master's commands."

"Can we see the master?"

"He is not at home."

"When is he expected to return?"

"I cannot tell."

"What is his name?"

"Madame! You don't know my master's name! He! he!—that is odd. Well, his name is Buckler, Johann Buckler. You must be a stranger in these parts."

"Buckler!" cogitated Madame Dallheimer, "I never heard the name before. Do you know what he means to do with us?"

"Nay, Madame, how should I? I should have thought," she added, examining, with a look of perfect simplicity, the beautiful face of Ida—"but no, the master has got a wife already, whom he dearly loves." The girl then retired, and left them alone till dinner-time.

The perplexity of the prisoners increased every moment, and their terror diminished. It was evident that nothing like violence was contemplated, but that their liberty would be bought and sold like an article of commerce. The idea was consoling to persons who had abundance of wealth at their disposal; and yet they could not help at times feeling a qualm of fear come over them as they remembered that they were in the hands of such men as Peter the Black and his comrades. The "master" they acquitted of ferocity, at least in its external indications; but he was but one man in a numerous band, and who could tell how far his power or influence extended over the rest?

This day passed away, and then another. The almost unconscious hopes that the mother had formed, from reflecting that the baron Wolsenstein must be in the same neighbourhood, and would probably hear of so important a capture as that of travellers who journeyed in their own carriage, attended by an armed escort, began gradually to die away. He had been in haste, she remembered with a sigh, to get to Mayence; and even if the reports of the abduction had reached his ears, it

would have been impossible for him to suspect that the sufferers were his friends. He was no doubt, ere now, at the place of his destination, and occupied in arranging his affairs, so as to be able to lay the state of his property and heart before her at the same time.

Madame Dallheimer, however, was deceived. The baron was too generous and high-minded not to feel an interest in the heroines of the romantic reports which already, it seemed, had begun to fly about the country, whether they were strangers or not ; and the following epistle, put into the trembling hands of the ladies by the servant girl, will, we trust, redeem his character with the reader :—

“ My dear Madame Dallheimer,

“ How little did I know that you, and your angelic daughter, were the wandering damsels, with whom public rumour is so busy, who were spirited away by the demons of the mountain ! My sympathy being excited by the story, although I believed that the parties were strangers, I could not determine, on leaving the scene of the melodrama till I had ascertained whether it were possible for me to be of any service. In the course of my inquiries I learnt sufficient to convince me that I ought to have a much stronger interest in the fate of the fair victims than that inspired by the calamities of strangers ; and throwing myself upon the generosity of the outlaws—who really possess a kind of grotesque honour (!)—I am allowed to visit you in your cell, and endeavour to mediate between you and the avarice of your captors.

“ It now only remains for me to receive your permission also ; when I shall immediately fly to offer you my condolence—my purse—my life itself, if necessary.

“ Believe me to be, my dear Madame Dallheimer,

“ Ever your devoted friend,

“ WOLFENSTEIN.”

It is needless to say with what delight this epistle was perused and reperused by her to whom it was addressed, or with what eagerness the permission was given which

the writer, with a politeness that seemed to be rather ill-timed, had thought it necessary to solicit. Madame Dallheimer began to think that every thing had happened for the best, and she confidently reckoned that, before reaching Mayence, the affair would be completely arranged between her daughter and the baron.

Wolfenstein at length made his appearance, and Madame Dallheimer, in the fulness of her joy, met him at the door and threw herself in his arms—calculating, possibly, on the effect of example on Ida. The baron, however, instead of anticipating a similar indulgence from the daughter, bowed gravely, and then advancing slowly, raised her hand to his lips. There was something, notwithstanding, in this mode of salutation which pleased both ladies. With the mother it was timidity, respect, devotion ; with Ida, it was the homage of a man of gallantry who did *not* love.

After the first condolences, griefs, regrets, and then hopes and congratulations, were over, Wolfenstein could not help expressing his amazement at the comparative comfort in which he found them lodged.

"When I first saw the building," said he, "I expected to find you in a subterranean dungeon ; for no human being could have imagined that the chambers above ground had even a roof to cover them. Come, come, my dear madame, matters might have been much worse. Suppose yourself in a country inn, detained by a storm, and you will be quite comfortable ; and, as for the ransom, you can set it down as merely a little extravagance in the bill."

"Since we have now a friend in whom we can confide," replied Madame, "to cheer and sustain us, my daughter and I will cease to murmur. But can you give me any idea how long our imprisonment is to last ? Mine host, so far from being in a hurry to present his bill, has as yet not even seen his guests. His name they tell us, is Buckler—Johann Buckler. What is he ?—but that is a foolish question."

"He is the renowned Schinderhannes." Ida grew pale, and Madame Dallheimer uttered an exclamation of terror.

" You need be under no apprehension," said the baron ; " at least no additional apprehension. There is, as I mentioned in my note, a kind of rude honour among these men, notwithstanding their unlawful profession ; and if the affair of the ransom is properly managed, you will leave the district under the passport of Schinderhannes himself." Madame Dallheimer looked anxiously towards Ida.

" The outlaw," said he, understanding the glance, is lately married to a woman of great beauty and commanding talent. But even were this not the case, your daughter would have nothing to fear, unless for her heart. Schinderhannes, like a kindred personage, notwithstanding all the stories that are told, is not quite so wicked as he is black."

" What was the origin," asked Ida, " of that strange and abominable soubriquet ?"

" It originated in truth. He is in reality the scion of a family which exercised the hereditary profession described by his name ; a profession which you know is only less the object of abhorrence in our country than that of public executioner. His birth, therefore, was his first misfortune. He was born an outlaw ; and his mother brought him forth without the pale of society."

" You interest me," said the young lady, " What a pity that talents like his, so universal, so extraordinary, as they must undoubtedly be, had not been properly directed. What a pity that his own heart did not prompt him——"

" Pshaw ! what has the heart to do with it ? If the ' pale of society ' were a palisade of iron, it might be overleaped by the bold, or bored through by the crafty ; but it is a wall built of the very stuff that men's minds are made of, plastered over with cold, smooth pride, and spiked with impassable prejudices. The heart of Schinderhannes prompted him to take vengeance on his fellow-men for their disdain ; but even this was accidental. He committed a robbery in early boyhood, when as yet the crime was unconnected in his mind with the idea of dishonour ; and, instead of being sent supperless to bed, which would have been the punish-

ment in another station of society, he was tried, convicted, led forth to the public market, and his body torn with ignominious stripes.

"The lash burnt where it fell, and left indelible scars behind. The rest of his history is written in the blood of others. He ultimately identified his cause with that of all who were the enemies of society ; united in one vast association the various troops of outlaws who were unable singly to look their opponents in the face ; and he whom nature might seem to have intended for the general of an army, became the chief of banditti."

Wolfenstein spoke with so much feeling, and looked so amiable in his enthusiasm, that Ida involuntarily put out her hand.

"You interest me exceedingly," said she ; "I should so like to see this poor Schinderhannes ; and if you will only be present, and let me lean on your arm, I shall not be afraid."

"I shall take care to be present," replied the baron, taking the proffered hand with a smile. Madame Dallheimer at this auspicious moment became suddenly aware of the impropriety she had been guilty of in receiving a visiter in such frightful dishabille ; and hurried into the dressing room to finish her toilet, charging Ida to retain the baron till she returned, as she had a thousand things to say to him. The young lady and Wolfenstein were thus left to a tête-à-tête.

An awkward pause ensued. Ida had been re-assured, as we have said, by the manner of Wolfenstein as he entered the room ; and his subsequent display of feeling, conveyed, however, rather in the manner than in the words, absolutely won her regard. An idea occurred to her founded on these impressions, the instant her mother quitted the room, which, when it was time to turn it to account, filled her with confusion. The exigence, however, was pressing ; and the once careless and cold-hearted libertine seemed to her now a man worthy of her confidence.

"Were all your friends well," said she, by a sudden

effort, and blushing deeply, "when you left Aix-la-Chapelle?"

"You forget that we commenced our journey on the same day."

"True, true: but—my mother's business was so instant—that—that we had no time to take leave or make inquiries."

"Then perhaps you have not even heard of poor Benzel's fate?"

"No—" said Ida, breathlessly, and her flushed cheek turning deadly pale.

"He lost his fortune at play."

"Oh! true—now I remember; I think I heard—"

"Or guessed? He called at your house, as I have since understood, when all was over; and, finding that you had just gone, he retired to an old château which he had lately sold, and remained there in solitude and destitution till—" Ida, who had been gazing with a wild expression in his face, appeared to be falling; and Wolfenstein ran and caught her in his arms.

"Did you say his death?" she inquired, without moving, and in a whisper so faint that he could hardly catch it.

"No—no; he is alive, and I hope, well."

"Then why, sir, did you dare—" cried she, breaking from his hold—"to—to—to—" but sobs choked her voice, and at length covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

"I am so weak"—said she, recovering, but not daring to raise her eyes to those of Wolfenstein—"my nerves are so much shattered—"

"He deserves the interest you take in him!" said the baron warmly, "had he not been a pretender to your hand, and discarded by Madame Dallheimer—not for his gaming, but for his losses—he never would have risked the remainder of his fortune on the chance of recovering what was gone."

"What has become of him?"

"Some days ago, he was wandering through the country, an outcast and a beggar—with a guitar on his

shoulder, and a knapsack on his back—seeking his lost mistress."

"And now?" said Ida, her eyes streaming with unrepressed and delicious tears.

"I do not know; but I fancy he is by this time not far off; as I know he must have received correct information, however he came by it, of the destination of the party."

"You will perhaps see him?"

"If possible. His friends, however, should not be too sanguine. This is a wild neighbourhood; and he was alone—moneyless, and friendless."

"But you will find him out—you will see him—you will serve him?"

"I will do all I can; of that you may rest assured. And now, let me beg you to excuse me to Madame Dallheimer, as I have pressing business. Tell her that I shall use my best endeavours to expedite the affair of the ransom; and that, in the meantime, I have procured for her and you permission to walk in the neighbourhood of the house. Adieu!" and the baron extended his hand to Ida. She siezed it with both her's and pressed it to her heart; and then, ashamed of the action, turned suddenly round and fled into the dressing-closet.

Some days of feverish anxiety passed away, intermixed with gleams of delightful thought, and Ida had heard no more of her lover, and seen no more of the baron. The walks in the neighbourhood were at first more than commonly interesting. The scenery was wild but picturesque; and the figures that enlivened it presented generally, in manner and costume, that boldness and singularity that appertains to the romantic.

The small, low door of the farm-house received visitors of every description. Sometimes a strongly-built man, with pistols in his belt, and a sword by his side, would swagger in, all the master in his air, and all the ruffian in his face; with perhaps the cringing, creeping, withered anatomy of a Jew at his heels emitting from his half-closed eyelids a look of mingled cunning, terror, and ferocity. Groups of peasants were seen flitting in

and out, dressed in their holiday apparel, and looking as grave as if they were entering, or had just left a church. There seemed, indeed, to be as much etiquette observed as in the precincts of a royal court; and more especially the captive ladies observed, that although their own appearance must doubtless have excited curiosity, this was rarely manifested even in a look.

Ida at length felt so completely at home, that she frequently went out to walk unaccompanied by Madame Dallheimer; and indeed, if the truth must be confessed, she now found the company of her mother more irksome than she dared to confess even to herself.

One day, when walking in a field at a short distance from the house, she observed a young woman, covered with a Jewish mantle and hood, stop and hesitate in the public path, and look towards her. Ida went a few steps on; but on looking round, the stranger had forsaken the path, and was walking hastily in the direction of the spot where she stood. On meeting her eye, however, she paused and hesitated as before; but in another minute, with what appeared to be a strong effort, she began to advance again, and on reaching the young lady, threw herself on her knees before her.

"Oh my lady!" said she, in a voice that was music itself, while, her hood falling back disclosed a face of almost perfect beauty—"Oh my lady, I hope you will not be angry; but I have a petition to make, on the success of which the happiness of my life depends." Ida was surprised. The girl was so very young, and there was so much of infantine simplicity even in the earnestness of her manner, that she hoped her petition could only refer to one of those mole-hills that the imagination of youth exaggerates to mountains. It seemed odd, however, that her prayer, of whatever nature it might be, should be addressed to a prisoner; and with some hesitation, mingled with kindness, she raised her from her knees, and desired her to proceed.

"There is a young gentleman," began the petitioner—

"Ah, the old story," thought Ida.

"Who is confined in the old tower at Birkenfeld, from which it is believed he will be taken out in a very few days, tried by a military commission, and shot."

"Is he your brother, my poor girl, or your lover?"

"Neither, madame, he is my friend."

"Have you known him long?"

"For several days. We crossed the Hohe-Wald in the same party; and being overtaken by a storm, it was night when as yet our place of destination was distant. My husband wandered from the group in the dark. I was left with no one but heaven and this young stranger to protect me."

"Speak," cried Ida, seizing her by the arm—"No—not a word—Go on! He *did* protect you?"

"Like a brother!" continued the young woman, sobbing; "He half carried me through the forest; he escaped with me from a house where we thought our lives were threatened; and when old Moritz's mill was fired—as your ladyship may have heard—seeing some one, whose face was disguised, put his arm round my waist, he rushed forward, and was immediately felled to the ground."

"Of what crime is he accused?" demanded Ida breathlessly, who would hear the worst before permitting her suspicions to be realized.

"Of offering armed resistance to the police, although they—as your ladyship knows—fired first upon us."

"And why, in the name of heaven, did you not tell this tale to the authorities at Birkenfeld, instead of wasting time by coming here?"

"Alas, madame, I perceive you do not know all. The authorities would not listen to me, or to fifty testimonies like mine, in such a case. The unhappy prisoner, who, as I believe, was never in this part of the country before, has been proved by a crowd of witnesses, and—for what reason I cannot guess—has even confessed himself to be —"

"Whom?"

"Your ladyship's husband!"

"She is mad or she takes me for another! Tell me, do

you know—did you ever hear his—No! not a word! Describe his person, and let me lose hope by degrees.”

“ He is rather above the middle size, with dark hair and eyes, and a melancholy, but noble expression of countenance. He wore a brown frock soiled with travel, and a pair of long military boots, more white than black; and carried a small bundle suspended over his shoulder on a sword, while a guitar ——”

“ Oh God; it is he! my heart foretold it!” and Ida, for a moment, appeared stupefied with despair.

“ Come, come,” cried she, starting in an instant from her trance ; “ this is no time for grief, but action. For whom do you take me, that you suppose my influence can be of any avail ?”

“ For the lady of master Johann Buckler, madame.”

“ It is a mistake. I am a prisoner, waiting for ransom ; but I have money—I have a friend, if I knew but how to find him—I have—come, come ; we can talk as we go along. The lady you seek is perhaps in the house ; go bodily in, and I will accompany you, and support your petition.”

Before they reached the house, Ida was in possession of every particular, so far as it was known to Magdalene, of Carl Benzel’s history, since he made his appearance among the group of Jews in the abode of old Adonijah, at Trèves. It was plain to the terrified listener that he was made the scape-goat of the banditti ; but why he should have lent himself to a deception that gave up his own head to the block was beyond her comprehension.

“ Can you account for it, Magdalene ?” said she holding her back by the arm as she reached the door, “ I feel as if my mind were dim, and I could not catch the thoughts that flit through it like shadows.”

“ It is plain to me now,” replied Magdalene. “ You love him ; and a creature so fair as you loves not in vain. He must have heard of your captivity, and been bribed, by the promise of your safety, to lend himself to the designs of Shinderhannes.”

“ You are right,” said Ida, melting, for the first time into tears ; “ he was ever brave, and generous, and high-

hearted. He gives up his life for her to whom the world will be like a grave when he is dead."

They were interrupted by the first appearance of anything resembling disorder which Ida had witnessed at the farm. It arose from the terror of an old Jew, who, although walking alone, appeared to be on no errand of his own seeking. When he reached the door his heart failed him, and he stopped short, and turned an imploring look upon one of the armed visitors we have described, who followed at some distance.

"Come, jog," said the latter roughly, as he came up to the door.

"My good friend——"

"Jog, I say. In with you, you Jewish cur;" and he gave him a push.

"I do confess that I am a Jew, yea also a cur, and the son of a cur." Another push. "I am not worthy a glance of the master's eye; I am the meanest of my tribe, and my tribe is the meanest of the tribes of Israel."

"What, you will not budge? Nay then——"

"Oh my lord, only forgive me for this time. There is a dollar--one, two, three, yea, *three* dollars. I am an old man, my lord; I am the beggar who sitteth at the gate asking alms, and this is all I possess in the world!" His lordship coolly deposited the coins in his pocket; and then, taking up the miserable Hebrew under his arm, strode into the house.

The two females looked at one another in dismay, appearing to draw a bad augury from this incident; nevertheless, they seized the opportunity of being piloted into the presence; and forgetting in their fellowship of sorrow all distinctions of rank, grasped firmly each other's hand, and followed close upon the heels of the bandit.

CHAPTER III.

THE BANDIT-QUEEN.

When Ida and her new friend entered the presence chamber, all was as silent as the grave. The Jew was set down near the door more dead than alive ; and our petitioners had an opportunity of observing the scene over his bowed head.

At the farther end of the room, the floor was slightly elevated ; and in front of this portion, which might be termed the stage, or hustings, was placed a table, with writing materials, where sat the principal actress of the show.

She was a woman in the very prime of youth, fantastically attired in a scarlet riding dress, embroidered with gold. A small round hat, without a veil, was stuck lightly on her head ; and her black hair, without comb, or band of any kind, hung in the wildest confusion over her shoulders and bosom, descending in glossy wreaths, that appeared to curl naturally, even to her waist. The high colour of her cheeks receiving a still deeper tinge from her dress, looked like the flush of pride and conscious beauty ; and her eyes, glistening and flashing in their darkness, struck the gazer at once with fear and admiration. If any thing could have detracted from the real beauty of her features, it would have been the excess of what is called *spirit* ; and yet, although her air and manner were not strictly feminine, they could with still less propriety have been stigmatised as masculine. The gallant daring, the haughty defiance, the generous disdain that sat on her brow and lightened in her eyes, were not the qualities of the same name we find in man ; or at least, touched by the poetry of woman's imagination, they had acquired in her a character peculiar to the sex.

At the back of the hustings ten or twelve men stood uncovered. They were armed with carbines, swords, and pistols ; and looked like what they were—the most daring, fierce, and desperate ruffians in Europe. Immediately behind the chair of the bandit-queen—for such she seemed—Magdalene discovered, with a start, the Jewish Leah, once her rival in the love of Ishmael ; and at one end of the table, seated on the edge of a stool—which appeared to be half-held as an honour, and half claimed as a right,—old Adonijah was busy turning over, with a trembling hand, a packet of papers.

The company at the lower end of the room were chiefly peasants, both male and female. They remained grouped as near the door as they could well stand ; and appeared to be so filled with awe that they hardly dared to breathe freely.

Our petitioners had just time to make these observations, which they did (being women) in a single glance, when the “mistress,” striking the table smartly with her riding-switch that lay upon it, inquired—

“What is the next case?” and the refractory Jew, with his body bent till the trunk was at right angles with the thighs, was led forward into the middle of the room.

“Isaac Herz,” said the mistress ; “it has been reported to us that you are never seen abroad without an escort of gendarmes. Is this true or false?” The Jew bent still lower—tried to speak—gasped—but not a word would come.

“Such fooleries are not permitted. What is it you fear? Do you not know that if we desired your life—by a single word of the mouth, by a sign of the finger—we could have you *shot* in the midst of an hundred gendarmes?” To give proper emphasis to the sentence, the beautiful speaker snote the table again, as she pronounced the word “*shot*;” and at the ominous sound, Isaac Herz sprang two feet from the floor.

“Didst thou hear?” demanded the mistress, in a still more terrible tone; while a gleam in her proud eye, and a sudden fullness in her rich cheek, proclaimed that she had much difficulty to hold from laughing.

Isaac tried again to speak, but it was all in vain ; his throat was dry; his lips crackled in the attempt, like old parchment ; and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He bent himself to the floor, however, till his forehead touched the boards ; and was then crawling backwards from the presence, when he was suddenly seized by his guard, and dragged towards the table.

“Thirty-six francs, French money, for the audience!” bawled a stentorian voice. Grimly smiled the banditti at the horror of the Jew ; and their young mistress was so much overpowered by the ridicule of the scene, that she turned round, as if addressing Leah, and hid her face in her handkerchief. Leah herself stood without altering a muscle, and with her eyes fixed on the ground ; and old Adenijah only raised his head for an instant at the chink of the coins, which Isaac at length drew, one by one, from his pocket.

When this transaction was settled, and the Jew had crept out of the room, the mistress smote the table again, and called the next case ; when Magdalene immediately darted forward, followed by Ida, and approached close to the hustings.

“What is this?” demanded the mistress, examining both the clients with a keen brief glance—“It is the name of a man that is next on the list.”

“The case I have to state, madame,” replied Magdalene, “cannot be postponed. It is a matter of life and death ; and you reject the petition without hearing it, if you refuse to hear it on the instant.” The mistress looked again at her with a deep and searching gaze ; but did not direct her eye a second time to Ida.

“Let the room be cleared,” said she, “of spectators—” they instantly vanished—“and now say on.”

When she had obtained permission, Magdalene related succinctly, and with great simplicity, all that she knew, although something less than the reader already knows, of the situation of Carl Benzel ; and concluded by adjuring her hearer to interpose for the preservation of his life.

The mistress listened attentively, but without any display of womanly feeling. She appeared either to have

been already familiar with the story, or to be altogether incapable of sympathy.

" You say your husband wandered from you in the dark ?" said one of the banditti, striding forward— " How did that happen ? Had you not hold of his arm ?"

" Yes, sir—but—but—we heard the cry of a—a—a—some kind of bird—"

" Was it a sparrow ?"

" No."

" Nor a linnet ?"

" No."

" Nor an owl ?"

" It really escapes my memory—but—yes, I think it was an owl."

" And you were frightened of course ?"

" Yes."

" And your husband left you to go and see what it could be ?"

" Precisely." A look of much meaning passed among the banditti.

" Does the cry of any other bird frighten you as much ?" continued the cross-questioner ; " or have you an especial antipathy to owls ?" Magdalene grew pale.

" It was dark," said she, " the road was silent ; my nerves were weakened by the fatigues of the journey : the chirp of a sparrow would have frightened me."

" There is no need of this," said the mistress, hurriedly, " the sound *did* frighten her—the man *was* fool enough to leave his wife in the hands of a stranger. Come, I should not wonder if it was an affair of gallantry after all, and if it was the wife herself who gave the husband the slip!"

" Madame," said Magdalene, " there are two persons beside you, who are able to vouch for the truth of my story if they choose." Adonijah and his daughter exchanged looks, but remained silent ; and the banditti grouping together began to talk earnestly, but in so low a tone that the purport of their discussion did not pass the bounds of the hustings. The mistress all on a sud-

den became dejected. The light forsook her eye ; and, leaning her head upon her hand, she sunk into a deep reverie.

“ Madame,” said Magdalene, while a generous enthusiasm beamed in her look, “ if I have had the misfortune to offend you unwittingly, I am in your hands, do with me as you please : but, in the mean time, Carl Benzel is in the prison-tower of Birkenfeld, and in a very few days must suffer death in the character he personates, if not released by the valour and generosity of him for whom he appears to be contented to die !”

“ Madame,” said Ida, stepping forward, “ if money can be of any assistance, I have abundance. If necessary, to deliver *him*, make me a beggar.” The mistress did not raise her head for some time ; but the heaving of her bosom betrayed her agitation.

“ You have heard ?” said she at last, standing up, and turning about sternly to the robbers.

“ We have said,” they replied simultaneously; and as the deep low voices died away, the silence that succeeded was strange and even awful. The mistress sunk down on her chair by the table, and burying her face in both hands, remained motionless for some moments : then raising her head slowly——

“ Magdalene, wife of Ishmael, the son of Joab,” said she, “ it is ordered that you return forthwith to your house, and there remain for at least three days, unless at the special command of your husband. You, lady, will be so good as to retire to your chamber.” The orders were no sooner issued, than two sentries, who were posted near the door, with drawn swords, came forward to clear the room ; and Ida and Magdalene, after a vain attempt to make themselves heard, gave up their plea.

“ Adieu !” said Magdalene to her companion when they were outside the door. “ There is that in the eye of yonder bandit-queen which makes me incline to trust her. I am convinced there is more than meets the ear in her injunction to me to remain at home; and since it seems I can do no good elsewhere, I shall even obey.” Ida, unable to advise, or almost to think, fold-

ed the girl in her arms, and kissed her ; and the two friends, who not an hour before had met for the first time, parted with tears and trembling.

"It is strange!" thought Ida, as she endeavoured to find her way through the labyrinth of ruins to her own apartment. "The eye of that outlaw's wife seems to possess a kind of fascination which I can no more account for than I could resist. Is it possible that I can have ever seen her before? Surely not. And yet—good heaven, what an idea! Yes, it was the resemblance that struck me ; and that resemblance can only be an accident of nature. It must be so. What sorcery of circumstances could have produced on a sudden so extraordinary a metamorphosis?" The object of her meditations at this moment emerged from a gap in the ruined wall, and stood before her like a spirit. Ida, after the first start of surprise, perused her features with intense curiosity.

"You are right, madame," said the 'bandit queen,' crossing her hands upon her bosom, and bending lowly before her ; "the wife of Schinderhannes is the peasant Liese!"

"Can it be possible? What a strange world is this! Oh, Liese, it is I who must now bend to you! You have the power, and surely you have the will to assist me. You must have known Carl Benzel—you *did* know him, and you knew him to be kind, and noble, and good, and generous, and brave. Will you not save him, Liese? Will you not utter the word—the single word—which will restore him to life, and freedom, and happiness?" Liese had covered her face with her hands, and tears were now seen gushing through between her fingers.

"And is it *you* who ask me?" cried she, dashing suddenly away the rebellious drops. "What right has Ida Dallheimer to put such a question to Liese? Did *you* watch the live-long night by his fever-bed, and listen to the ravings of his love and his despair? Did *you* tend and cherish him like a sick infant, surrendering to his wants your thoughts, your time, your labour, your 'f worldly wealth, though it lay but in the compass

of a dollar ? Did *you* count the beatings of his pulse, and the heavings of his bosom ? and when he opened his feeble eyes, and they rested on no eyes but yours—no friend, no love, no kinsman in the wide world—did *you* fly away out of his sight, to give vent in secret to the pride, and joy, and grief of your full heart, in tears, and sobs, and prayer ? All that did *I* !

“ Now mark me, Ida Dallheimer,” continued Liese, with a proud shame, “ I do not love him ! I could have loved him *then*—I do confess I could—but it was impossible. The name of Ida was on his dreaming lips, and her idea the only strong and enduring image in his fainting bosom. I did not love him—I could not love him with the love of a mistress ; but he was to me even as something of my own, dear, lone, and secret, which the world knew not of ; and when he left me to go in search of that Ida, for whom I had preserved him, and his form faded slowly away in the distance, I felt, for the first time, that I was bereft and alone on the earth.

“ Would I save Carl Benzel ? save him whom I tore from the arms of death, and who thus, and therefore, became mine ? Ay ! at the expense of any life existing—but one—and that one is not my own !”

“ You tell me strange things, Leise ;” said Ida Dallheimer, putting her arm round the waist of the bandit’s wife, “ and was it of *me* he spoke, even in dreams and sickness ? Was it *my* name that hovered on his delirious lips ? Did he know *me* in his heart when all the visible world was strange to his feverish eyes ? Did his mind—his thoughts—his—his——” and, her voice choked with sobs, she leaned her face on Liese’s bosom, and wept aloud.

“ But come,” said Ida, starting up, after a few moments’ forgetfulness, and dashing away her tears, and flinging back the disordered hair from her eyes, “ you speak as if in this case your powers were limited, or wholly neutralized. Something must be done. Let us act first, and weep afterwards. Counsel me, my friend, what to do. • My fortune shall go, every dollar—and I will beg what may be wanting ; or I will visit him in the dungeon, and he shall escape dressed in my clothes ; or,

if all is unavailing, I will at least be near, to sustain and cheer him in the hour of death—and then—then—when all is over——”

“ What then ?”

“ I will sit down under the guillotine and die !”

“ I told him so !” cried Liese. “ I told him the very words ; and he believed me on my woman’s faith, and blessed me in his heart !

“ I would not deceive you, dear lady, on such a point for the world. I dare not bid your mind be at rest : for all is doubt and darkness around us. The time is so short since my destiny was linked to that of Schinderhannes, and the act itself was so sudden, that as yet I hardly know who I am, although I try to queen it as bravely as I can. The laws of the association are written in blood ; and neither chief nor subaltern can strain them one hair’s breadth. Heaven knows the power of Schinderhannes is great enough for one man to sway : but it has its limits ; he dares not for his life overstep those boundaries which are already placed so distant as hardly to leave an excuse for the desire.

“ On the night that Carl Benzel was taken at the mill, Schinderhannes was also in the power of the police. This would have been nothing at another time—a circumstance hardly worthy of notice ; but at that moment it was life or death to the individual, and salvation or total ruin to the band. A cordon militaire was drawn closely round, for the sole purpose of capturing this famous chief ; and his usual resource, a retreat to the right bank of the Rhine, which we now contemplate at our ease, seemed to be impossible.

“ In the necessity of the moment, it was determined that Benzel should personate Schinderhannes ; and thus produce the dispersion of the military force, and leave time for our escape. The general resemblance between the two originated the idea ; but without a certain something in the mind of the prisoner, which could be so wrought upon as to induce him to continue the deceit, were it necessary, even to the block—the plan was hopeless. Benzel was the only man living, so far as was known, who possessed at once courage, honour,

and weakness enough for the undertaking ; and he accordingly, although fallen upon by the chance of the moment, was chosen for the victim."

" Selfish, cruel, dishonourable policy !" exclaimed Ida. Liese smiled bitterly. She perceived that the young lady had forgotten that they were talking of banditti ?

" You do us a little injustice," continued she. " It was never intended otherwise than to liberate him as soon as circumstances permitted ; and this would have been easy had he been confined in the ordinary prison. The reputation, however, of his comrade, Peter Schwarz, procured them the honour of a dungeon, from which escape is now impossible, except by a regular military assault. This attempt, in which many lives would necessarily be lost, and, after all, the event be very doubtful, would be made without hesitation to save the chief ; but for a stranger, or even one of the humbler grade in the band, it is received like an insult to their judgment to propose it."

" Then there is no hope ?"

" There is *hope*. The firmness and intrepidity of Carl Benzel appear to men who are unable to comprehend his motives, as if they bordered on the miraculous ; and on *one* condition they will consent to buy him with a price of blood which makes me shudder to think of ?"

" And that condition ?"

" Excuse me. Your knowing it would answer no purpose, neither am I at liberty to tell. I have only further to say, that all that *can* be done is now in progress ; and that one who never yet fainted under difficulties, is at this moment perilling his life in the cause."

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAWS OF THE OUTLAWS.

When Ida, after the conversation described in the last chapter, returned to her apartment, it was fortunate for her that her mother was gone in search of her, else her flushed cheek and restless eye would have told a tale that might have brought upon her a maternal persecution not easy to bear in her present state of mind. As it was, she was at liberty to wander uninterrupted through the room, as if looking for something ; to fly, every now and then, towards the window, forgetting that the only view it afforded was of an inner court, heaped up with ruins ; to grow pale by fits, and moan, and weep ; and then spring upon her feet, and with cheeks glowing with pride, compressed lips, and eyes darting fiery indignation through the tears that still hung trembling on the lashes, fix a daring and determined glance on the shadowy spectacle that swam before her.

All doubts, if her heart had permitted any to linger, were now at an end. Carl loved her, and was now about to lay down his head upon the block for her sake. This was the one idea that absorbed her mind for some time, and that perpetually recurred even in the midst of the wide and various reflections to which it was necessary to give up her faculties. A single hope, it seemed, remained. The banditti were willing to risk their lives for a consideration that was neither money nor safety. What could this object be that was so valuable, as to outweigh with them even the thirst of gold ? A terrible suspicion arose in the mind of Ida.

" If it be so," she cried, " all is lost. Even were it possible to suppose that he loves me so little as not to prefer his honour to his love, there would be now no

motive for the sacrifice*. He must know, being in confidential communication with Schinderhannes, that I am safe ; and the degradation, which I dare not describe even to my own mind, would be submitted to from cowardice alone. Rather than this would I see him, with my own eyes, perish by the axe of the guillotine ; rather than this, would I sit, with upturned face, at the foot of the scaffold, and smile at the red rain that splashed upon my brow !”

The character of Liese induced her still more strongly to give way to this suspicion. Liese had evidently no moral perceptions either of honour or dishonour, as the words are understood in the world. She appeared to glory in her station as the wife or mistress of an outlaw; and the deeper he plunged in crime, and consequent ignominy, the prouder she would be of her husband. She seemed to enter *con amore* into the airs and state of a chieftainess ; and her eyes were only suffused with tears, when she reflected that the power even of the famous Schinderhannes was circumscribed.

Ida, however, did ample justice to the estimable parts of her character. She was evidently untaught except by nature ; and the impulses of her woman’s heart, which to this interesting savage served instead of the laws of civilization, were in general amiable. She was ignorant of, or incapable of appreciating, the distinctions of vice and virtue as they are laid down by society; yet she was virtuous in the main by instinct. This companion of a robber was kind, humane, generous, and high-minded—capable of the truest friendship, and the most devoted love !

Magdalene, whom she would have liked better as a friend and companion, was altogether, as it appeared, of a different stamp ; and, precisely for that reason, was less to be trusted to in an emergency like this. She was one, Ida thought, who, when prompted by any feel-

* “ Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore ;
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.”

LOVELACE.

ing of womanly pity or generosity, would exhibit the noblest traits of feminine hardihood, which consists of endurance rather than action. She would implore a grace, and if refused, sit down and weep. She would save a friend, provided it did not involve the destruction of an enemy. She would bear the rack with a smile, but faint away if threatened with a sword.

This judgment was no doubt influenced by the extreme youth of Magdalene, and by the girlish beauty and innocence of her face ; yet Ida should have known that woman is in some respects the converse of man, and that in her, the softest character, when acted upon by momentous circumstances, is always the most energetic. But the reader is already able to detect her mistake, which will be seen presently to be more important in its results than might be imagined.

A day passed over in such speculations ; and then another. Wolfenstein, as she had been told, was at Mayence arranging for the ransom ; Liese was from home, if she could be said to have any settled home at all ; and our heroine was left to the dangerous society of her own thoughts. She became restless, feverish, almost mad. During the day, she either answered her mother incoherently, or gazed at her strangely, without comprehending what she said. At night she started screaming from her sleep. Her appetite was gone ; her cheeks were flushed ; her eyes glittered ; her step was quick, energetic, yet broken and irregular.

Madame Dallheimer saw that her daughter was ill, and that her illness was more of the mind than the body ; and she suspected, for the first time, that her love for Benzel was more deeply rooted than she had supposed. The appearance and manner of Ida at last became so alarming that the anxious mother, believing it to be almost a question of life and death, was half inclined to regret the decisive steps she had taken. By way of ascertaining the correctness of her suspicions, she at length ventured to mention the object of her daughter's attachment, and spoke kindly of one whose very name had long been an interdicted word between them.

Ida at first listened in terror and astonishment. The spell wrought, however ; her mind, that was only confused and oppressed, recovered its energy ; she saw at once her mother's meaning, and flinging her arms round her neck, burst into a passion of tears. So long and bitterly did she weep, that Madame Dallheimer became alarmed.

"Look up, my daughter," she cried ; "look up, my darling Ida ! He shall be yours, since it is necessary to preserve your life ; I swear by all a mother's love he shall be yours !"

"Oh, mother, mother, muttered Ida through her sobs, "you are too late ; they have killed him !" Madame Dallheimer was not so entirely covered by the hard crust of the world as not to be greatly shocked at this announcement ; and even when the circumstances were explained, and she knew her daughter was in all probability premature, she was so little accustomed to depend on accident or romance in her calculations, that she gave up, not without tears, the unfortunate young man for lost ; and then turned her thoughts towards the task of consoling Ida for a calamity that could not be avoided.

The incident had rather a beneficial effect than otherwise on Ida's mind ; her tears relieved her, and she took advantage of the comparative calm to consider still more closely the circumstances of his situation.

It was evident that as yet her lover was safe, or the news of the catastrophe would have reached her ere now, the distance being so inconsiderable. She was assured that everything was in progress that could be done for the advantage of the prisoner ; but what was done for her own ? Suppose the worst to happen, which was nothing more than the probability, what could console her for her present inactivity ? If Carl was indeed doomed to die, was he to die without a friend near him to whisper a parting blessing in his ear ? But again, if the plans of Schinderhannes failed, was it not time that her's should commence ? Was she to see him led out to the block without an effort to save him ? Ida knew not what she would do—

but she would do something. She would at least be on the spot to hear what was going on. If not admitted into the prison, she would at all events make one of the crowd who feasted their eyes on the execution ; she would wave her hand and scream forth his name till he heard her ; and his last word, and last thought, and last look would be her's.

The difficulty was how to escape from her mother, and from the farm. Liese had not returned, and was not expected that day ; and without her express permission, she knew that she could not wander above a hundred yards from the house. At dark, moreover, the outer doors of the building were surrounded, and could not be passed without an order.

The window of the dressing-closet opened upon a court, the walls of which appeared so ruinous, that she calculated on easily getting over them, if she could once effect her descent. The window, however, was a considerable distance from the ground, and the feat, if ventured upon at all, must be attempted in the evening twilight. But having *resolved* to make her escape, and find her way to Birkenfeld, everything else seemed easy ; and, with wonderful serenity, she set about manufacturing a rope out of a sheet to assist her descent.

The mother, whose restless thoughts had been left so long to feed upon themselves, that, like the Kilkenny cats, they appeared to have eaten one another up, was by this time wearied even to death of her captivity. She went to bed almost every day immediately after dinner; and Ida hoped that she would thus be able to steal to her enterprise without observation.

When the fateful moment came, however, a feeling almost resembling remorse, mingled with her generous enthusiasm. Her mother lay tranquilly on the bed, which in all probability she was henceforward to occupy alone ; and Ida on some slight pretence drew near, and laid upon the further pillow a note, containing some incoherent lines of explanation.

" You are almost asleep, mother," said she ; " give me the kiss of goodnight ! "

"It is not time—but there——"

"And will you not bless me too? Indeed, I need it!"

"God bless my child!" There was a fervour in Madame Dallheimer's manner while she spoke—caught no doubt from the tone in which the request had been made—which sent a thrill through the heart of Ida. She had felt a weakness gathering about her eyes; and but for this would perhaps have wept an adieu: as it was she turned away in a kind of awe, and when she had shut herself up in the closet, fell upon her knees, and prayed fervently. Then feeling calmed and strengthened by the exercise, she fastened the rope to a chest of drawers, which she had removed near the window; and throwing open the sash, and grasping her intended ladder firmly, she began her descent.

Her fingers were weaker, or her body heavier than she imagined; for she had scarcely sunk beneath the window, when the rope spun through her hands and she came to the ground with a heavy fall. The circumstance, for a little while, confused her perceptions; and with no distinct knowledge of the direction, she groped her way hastily through the ruins. On arriving at the wall it was far too entire and too lofty to be scaled; and in wandering along in search of an opening, or at least of some breaks that might serve for her feet, so much time was lost that it was almost dark. Still Ida would not despair, and at length her efforts were crowned with success. She was on the outer side of the buildings.

How to find the road was the next question; for she was at present on quite a different side of the farm than the one she had proposed to herself for her descent on setting out. Even in this, however, she was fortunate. Stretching at random across the fields, in a very few minutes she found the road, or at least a road, and, tempted to believe herself guided by Providence in the adventure, she pursued the track with confidence.

The difficulties of the journey, so far, being now surmounted, Ida had time to be terrified. The nearest

village was at a considerable distance, and the night threatened to become pitch dark. It was the very hour when evil spirits, whether corporeal or incorporeal, walked the earth. She grew more nervous every moment ; she started at every sound ; and at length, as the tramp of horses in the distance met her ear, she sprang aside from the road, and hid herself behind a tree.

The sound approached with great rapidity, and resembled to Ida's ear the tramp of a body of cavalry. The horsemen at last came in sight, moving dimly in the gloom like shadows ; and when they neared the place of her concealment, impelled by a fever of curiosity, she thrust her head between the branches, and gazed at them as they passed.

The first person she recognized was Peter Schwarz, the next Wolfenstein, and the next Carl Benzel. The party consisted of about twenty men, riding silently and sternly along ; and from the heads and limbs of some of them being bound up with handkerchiefs, it was evident that they had just been engaged in some bloody fray.

Ida neither screamed nor fainted ; she pursued the apparition when it swept past her with her eyes, and then regaining the road, followed in its track.

Carl Benzel then was at freedom ! There mingled not a touch of joy in this exclamation of her soul. In vain she tried to feel happy.

“ He is free ! ” said she aloud, “ he is free ! ” A voice answered within—

“ *How ?* ” and her heart grew sick and faint.

His deliverance had been effected by the band of Schinderhannes. The condition was then performed, the compact sealed. What condition ? What compact ? Why was he there riding among the foremost in a troop of banditti ? Why did he not make use of his recovered liberty to proceed to Mayence ; and if molested on the way, throw himself upon the justice and common-sense of the authorities ? Was it to see her he endured such society ? Even this did not satisfy her. Her heart was heavy, and only images of gloom and terror could find a place in her thoughts.

When she reached the farm she went boldly up to the principal entrance, and knocked loudly. There was no answer. She knocked again, beat at the door with a stone, screamed, still no answer. Ida pressed her hand on her brow, and inquired whether she was not in a dream.

What was to be done ? She went round to the stable door and listened. The horsemen had arrived, for she heard the painful panting of the steeds ; yet not a single individual had remained to attend them. She at length determined to find, if possible, the part of the wall by which she had escaped, and so re-enter the enclosure, and take her chance of getting back to her own apartment. The search was less laborious than she had expected, for in fact the place was not fifty yards from where she then stood ; and recognizing it at once by the broken parts of the masonry, she quickly clambered to the top, and looked down into the court.

" All was clear, and she was just about to commence her descent, when a sudden gleam of light from the body of the ruined edifice, which stood at a little distance in front, alarmed her ; and, shrinking down, she hid herself securely from observation, while at the same time a vista for her eye remained, through the fragments of the wall.

A door had opened in the building, and an armed man, with a light in his hand, after standing motionless for an instant, came out into the court ; and advancing within a few yards of the concealed spectator, stuck the torch into the ground, and stood still. This was the baron Wolfenstein ; and as the red light of the torch fell upon his features, in which sorrow, anger, and disdain were blended with a kind of wild dignity, Ida thought, she knew not why, of his description of the master-bandit, Schinderhannes.

The next who followed was a young man, unarmed, and bareheaded, who, but for his height, might have seemed a woman in disguise, so much of womanly grace and delicacy appeared in his countenance. The traits, however, bore distinct marks of oriental extraction, and Ida perceived that he was a Jew. He walked with his arms folded across his bosom, and his eyes fixed upon

the ground ; and when he perceived that the torch was planted, he stood still without raising his head.

Then came from thirty to forty wild-looking men, all armed to the teeth, and each with a torch in his hand ; and among them were an aged Jew, and a young woman of the same race. Ida gave a sigh of unutterable relief as the cortège had apparently entered, and the door shut with a clang behind them. But the next moment it reopened, and he for whom she had been looking, in the eager hope of not finding, strode hastily into the court, and shouldering through the crowd, advanced to the front. The door shut again with a clang ; and Wolfenstein, in a deep stern voice, gave the military order " Fall in !" and stepped up to the ranks himself, to look along the line.

The bare-headed youth remained alone. He was standing within a few paces of the wall, behind which Ida was concealed ; and the armed men, who quickly formed themselves into a semicircle, were about six times the space further off. All was silence for some moments ; but gradually the men began to talk earnestly, yet in a low voice, to each other, and a confused murmur ran along the line.

At this moment the Jewish maiden stepped out from the corner where she stood with the old man, and approached the youth.

" Ishmael," said she, quickly ; but in a voice that could only have been heard by him and Ida.

" Ishmael hears thee, Leah," was the reply.

" Wilt thou be warned ?" she went on : " it is not yet too late !"

" I am warned."

" Thou didst once love me ?"

" Ay."

" And having gained my love, thou didst cast it away."

" Thou say'st it. The love that I gained I found was not worth preserving, and therefore I cast it away."

" It is not that !—it is not that ! I scorn thee, recreant Jew, who runnest after strange women, and strange gods : but, because of thy falsehood, I am even

as a dishonoured woman in my tribe, and the maidens point the finger at me, and say—‘ There goes Leah, the love-forsaken ! ’ I will not bear it. Wilt thou do justice, or brave revenge ? ’

“ I have done justice. I have married her who trusted me.”

“ It is false—you canst not have done it ! ”

“ It is true.”

“ Then perish ! ” and Leah retired to the line.

“ Prisoner,” said Wolfenstein, now approaching him, “ you have this day been delivered from the guillotine at the hazard of our lives. It is needless, therefore, to say, that we have no personal enmity to you, but are urged solely by our sworn duty to administer faithfully the laws of the association. These laws, you are aware, leave us no alternative. We cannot be mistaken in their interpretation ; for there is no quibble or obscurity in them ; neither is there any commutation of punishment, or any other extension of mercy allowed. We have ourselves no power. We, as well as you, are sworn—dreadfully, fearfully sworn—to be faithful to the laws ; and any one—even I myself—who would presume to screen a transgression, would be held to share the guilt of the transgressor, and suffer punishment as well as he. Our laws are few ; they are only applicable to great offences, such as strike at the existence of the association ; the rest being left to the discretion of the chief. The punishment prescribed is alike in all—DEATH ; without hope—without reprieve.

“ Being a sworn apprentice of the association, you know all this as well as I ; but I repeat it now, lest you may labour under any confusion of mind in a situation of such peril ; and throw away your life in the vain thought that you are before one of those tribunals of the world where law is a solemn farce, and justice a cheat and mockery.

“ The crime of which you are accused is that of having divulged to a woman called Magdalene, on the night in which you left Trèves by my orders, the secret of your destiny ; a secret which you were sworn to keep

hidden in the very depths of your heart ; and the revelation of which paralyses our whole body. An apprentice, who betrays that he is so, is the most mischievous of traitors. He sets at nought the whole purpose and duty of the grade ; and, by bringing upon himself the persecutions or temptations of the authorities, places in jeopardy the lives of us all."

"The woman Magdalene," replied the Jew, "is the wife of my bosom ; her life is bound up in mine ; yea, her soul is in the palm of my hand."

"You hear him ?" said Wolfenstein, turning anxiously to the band.

"The law," murmured they, "makes no distinction ;" and the words running from one end of the line to the other, echoed like a groan through the court.

"But he has not confessed," said the baron, hastily ; "there must be proof. Where are the witnesses ?" The old Jew Adonijah stood forth.

"By the memory of my oath," said he, "I heard the words of his mouth when he spoke the secret into the ears of the Gentile woman Magdalene, who thereupon fainted away."

"The next : we must have two witnesses, since he is only a Jew." Leah and Carl Benzel advanced at the same moment ; but the former retired.

"The Jew has lied!" said our adventurer.

"Bless him ! bless him !" murmured Ida, almost audibly.

"I was in the room," continued he, "when Magdalene fainted in the arms of Ishmael, and, I swear that Adonijah was not present."

"That carries it for the prisoner !" exclaimed Wolfenstein. "The Jew has lied." The men murmured.

"He has grown gray in our service," said they ; "weigh the testimonies !"

"Can you offer any proof, Benzel ?" demanded the baron, anxiously.

"He shall convict himself !" said Benzel, and dragging the old man from the shade into which he had slunk, he brought him within the play of the torch-light.

"Look there," continued he, "all you who have eyes and hearts—look upon this man. Do you ask for proof that he is a liar? Can you not read it in his eyes? Is it not written in every line of his face, that he is a mean, cold, cruel, cowardly, traitorous villain?"

"He is a Jew!" cried Leah, stepping forward indignantly—"he is one of the wandering children of the captivity, and therefore every ruffian who chooses may jibe upon his countenance. Are ye men, and will ye not stand by your friend? Are ye brethren, even in guilt, and will ye not protect your brother? Listen to me—I demand it in the name of those laws which you dare not disobey—for I too am a witness."

"Stand off!" said the band. "To the ranks all but Leah. Hear her! Hear her!" and when Carl Benzel obeyed, they received him with loud murmurs, which continued for some time.

Leah turned to the prisoner during the confusion, and Ida could see that her brow flushed and then grew pale alternately more than once before she spoke.

"Ishmael!" said she, at length, but in a depressed and agitated voice,

"Lo! here am I."

"There is yet time! speak the word."

"What word?" demanded Ishmael, who looked like a man in a dream.

"Life, or death."

"Death! Death!" replied the Jew.

"So be it!" and Leah, after a look, a strange, long look, filled doubtless with the hopes and memories of years, turned away, and advancing into the full blaze of the torches, delivered her testimony.

Her face was as pale as marble; her eyes fixed; her lips cold and rigid; she looked like a beautiful statue.

"By the memory of my oath," said she, in a calm, clear voice, that betrayed not the slightest tremor, "even I, Leah, the daughter of Adonijah, did hear the words of Ishmael when he spoke the secret into the ear of his paramour." There was a dead silence for some

moments ; and then Wolfenstein advanced again to the prisoner.

"The testimony inclines against you," said he. There was a loud murmur among the band, and some voices cried "To the vote!"

"The testimony *inclines* against you," repeated the baron sternly, and laying an emphasis on the word which had caused the murmur. "The Jew, if we are to believe a Christian, whom I know to be a man of honour, has perjured himself; and the Jewess being his daughter, may therefore be at least suspected. We cannot clear your honour as you now stand ; for with us, justice does not lean to the side of mercy. Since your conduct appears in so dubious a light, we must demand a pledge for our safety : let Magdalene take the oaths, and become indeed the wife of your bosom."

"Magdalene ? Never! Have I not borne her away from her kinsmen, and her people ? Have I not steeped her young life in bitterness ; and led her, even at noon-day, through the darkness of the shadow of death ? Would'st thou have me do more ? Would'st thou have me rob her of the purity of her thoughts, and the integrity of her mind ? Would'st thou have me sear with guilt, even as with a seven times heated iron, the wounds of her bleeding heart ? Never ! Let me die the death, if this cup cannot pass from my lips ; but Magdalene, though not born to be happy, shall never become base."

Wolfenstein drew a pistol from his girdle, and Benzel rushed forward.

"Coward !" shouted he, "would you slay an innocent man ? Turn your weapon on me, for I am armed, and can return the shot !" Ida bent over the wall, regardless of concealment, her eyes, heart, soul, fixed upon the face of her lover. There was no risk of detection, however. The interest of that wild group was turned with such absorbing intensity upon the principal actors, that they would not have started at a thunderbolt.

"Is he guilty, or not guilty ?" demanded Wolfenstein.

"Guilty !" cried the band, with one voice, that rose like the howl of wolves upon the ear.

"It is false!" shouted Benzel, drawing a pistol from his belt with one hand, and his sword with the other, "cowards, it is false. But if you *will* commit murder, by the holy heavens, there will be at least two victims," and he levelled his pistol at the head of Wolfenstein.

"Remove him," said the latter calmly; and after a desperate, but momentary struggle, in which he never ceased to shout "murder! murder!" Benzel was disarmed, and dragged to the rear.

"Ishmael," said the baron, advancing close to his side, "a word would save you yet! a single word! Speak! I know you do not fear death; but remember Magdalene, how lonely, how friendless she will be. Speak; the pistol is at your ear; cry 'hold!' if you would live, if not——"

"Fire!" The baron pulled the trigger at the word, and Ishmael fell to the ground a dead man.

CHAPTER V.

THE WATCH OF THE DEAD.

"Where am I?" cried Ida, "help, mother! I have had such a dream!" It was no dream. She was lying among the ruins on the outer side of the wall, from which she had fallen senseless, as the pistol-shot rung in her ears. She knew that she must have lain a considerable time, for it was now pitch dark, her limbs were stiff with cold; and the blood was frozen upon her temple, which in her fall had come in contact with one of the stones.

What was she to do? How could she tell that they had removed the dead body? and if not, could her soul sustain the horror, not of its sight, but of its touch, when groping in the dark, her foot might perhapsplash in the blood of what had but just now been a human being, strong in health, and glorious in youthful beauty?

Another image, however, still more dreadful, presented itself to her imagination. She did not now inquire whether Carl Benzel was or was not leagued in the fellowship of guilt. He had offended, beyond hope of forgiveness, the very wretches whom she had just seen commit a cold-blooded murder, for what it appeared to her, would be reckoned, compared with his, only a venial transgression. *Two* corpses, by this time, in all probability, burthened the gory earth; and Ida, as soon as the idea assumed a definite shape in her fancy, instead of shrinking back with double repugnance, sprang suddenly upon the side of the wall, and in an instant was at the top.

The armed array had disappeared; and the scene of noise and strife and struggling was as silent as the dead, for whom it had become a grave. A single torch was stuck in the earth, beside a long dark formless object; at the further end of which knelt a human figure, the head covered with a black hood, that hung down almost till it touched what appeared to be the subject of her prayers or meditations.

Ida, relieved from her more selfish terrors, crept down the wall, oppressed with a feeling of awe which almost seemed to interdict her breathing, and approached the dead body. She hesitated for some time before daring to disturb the mourner; but at length the silence, unbroken even by a sigh, seemed so terrible, that in a sudden panic she pronounced the name of Magdalene.

It was Magdalene. She raised her head at the voice, and throwing back her hood, disclosed a face so pale, so wan, so death-like—and at the same time so sweet, so pure, so delicately beautiful, that she seemed more like a spirit than a woman.

“My poor girl,” said Ida, sinking on her knees, and folding her in her arms—“my poor Magdalene, let me weep with you!”

Magdalene looked strangely in her face; while an expression almost resembling a smile passed over her girlish features.

“Weep,” said she—“and with me? Oh no—no—

no—not yet ; there is more to be done. Could I weep, think you, with *him* lying there—and his blood circling and curdling round my feet ? Why, it is not cold yet !—and do you talk to me of tears ? no, no,—there is something must come before that !”

“ You talk wildly, Magdalene, and look wildly, but it is no wonder. Lean your head on my bosom, my poor girl, and try to think more softly :—think of his kindness—his love—his beauty, and then weep ; your tears will do you good.”

“ What, *weep*? I weep !—with such a sight before my eyes! I weep !—with a sound like that in my ears ! It is impossible. But you are only looking ; you do not hear. Can it be that you are so perfect in one faculty, and so dull in another ? Hush !”

“ What is it ?” asked Ida, breathlessly.

“ Hush—hark !”

“ What is it, in the name of heaven !” Magdalene rose slowly from the side of her shrinking friend, till her form seemed to expand to more than mortal stature.

“ What is it ?” replied she—“ Can you look at *that*, and ask what it is ? *It is the cry of blood* !

“ But if you cannot weep with me, dear lady, you can watch for me. Wrap this mantle round your shoulders ; there ;—now draw the hood over your face, and kneel down at my husband’s head. Promise me that you will not let them bury him till I come back.”

“ I will do what I can, Magdalene,” said Ida, who believed her to be labouring under a temporary alienation of mind—“ but you forget, that here I am as powerless as yourself.”

“ Alas, I did indeed forget ! I did not wish to see his face again till *then*, for fear the very dead should frown on me ; but now I cannot go without bidding him farewell, lest they hide him for ever from my eyes.” She knelt down by the side of the body ; and with a slow and trembling hand uncovered the face. She gazed for many moments without speaking, and apparently without breathing ; till her bosom at length began to move, and then to throb convulsively with those painful sobs that are unaccompanied by tears.

"Ishmael ! Ishmael !" she cried—"my love ! my lord ! my life ! Will you not answer me ? Will you not speak one word to your poor, lonely, friendless girl ? You were my first and my last, my only, my all ! My bosom thrilled, and trembled to your voice, like the strings of a harp to the touch of the minstrel. I was without mother, and without father, without sister, without brother ; and you were all to me in one. You led me on ; you held me up ; you watched over me ! Every thought of my soul was yours, every wish of my heart, every dream of my fancy ! And now you are here. O would that I had died in your stead—my kind, my generous, my high-hearted, my good, my true, my brave, my beautiful !

"Let your arms enfold me once more, unconscious though they be. There, press me closer to your bosom—closer—closer. And now, kind friend, true lover, sweet husband—with cold lips to colder, and a breaking heart to a broken one—farewell ! farewell ! farewell ! Magdalene, when she had finished her sad adieus, drew the covering again over the face of the corpse, and after smoothing down the wrinkles of the temporary shroud, rose up. Without a cloak, without a bonnet, with bare neck, and a silken sash round her waist, she looked so girlish, and so beautiful withal, that Ida's heart ached more and more as she looked upon her.

"How unfit a creature," thought she, "to strive with a world like this. Whither can she have taken it into her poor head to go? But it matters not. The excitement which now makes her look like some fair corpse animated by enchantment, will soon dissolve ; then her head will bow, and her heart break, and so she will die." Magdalene, in the midst of these reflections, pressed her silently in her arms, kissed her on the brow, and then climbing up the wall of the court, disappeared on the other side.

When Ida was left alone, watching by the dead body, the mystic and indefinite form of which was barely visible in the light of the solitary torch, she was unable to repress those undefinable feelings which curdle the

blood, and make the skin creep. The flame, as it waved in the wind, produced, by the shifting of the lights and shadows, the appearance of living motion; strange forms swam before her eyes, and invisible lips breathed in her ear; and at last the shuddering girl imagined that the body stirred. Just at this moment a door closed slowly and softly behind her; and she heard approaching the measured tread of a man.

Her first thought was of a spiritual visitation, and her second of murder; and she with difficulty repressed the shriek that rose to her lips. Sternly, however, the slow foot approached; and when it stopped by her side, so great a mastery had terror acquired over her reason, that her flesh shrunk and quivered as she awaited the blow. The midnight visiter stood silent, for many minutes; not even his breathing was heard; and at length Ida imagined that her senses had deceived her, and that he whom she supposed to stand tall, still, and majestic by her side, was only a phantom of her own creation.

She was speedily undeceived; for a man's hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a voice spoke in her ear.

"My poor girl," were the words, "my poor unhappy girl! God knows I would rather that I myself lay there to night than he!"

It was the voice of Carl Benzel. Ida was just about to throw back the hood, and spring upon her feet, when a sudden qualm came over her heart; she remembered the equivocal position in which her lover stood; and unable, in the suddenness of the meeting, to fix upon any line of conduct, she resolved to remain silent, and defer his recognition till she had time for thought.

"Ay, shrink," continued he, "even from the voice of friendship. Shrink into your widowed self, my poor Magdalene; grieve—weep, as one who will not be comforted: for he was worthy of your tears, my noble, generous, gallant friend! worthy to live in a woman's eye, worthy to be buried in a woman's heart." He sunk upon his knees beside the corpse, and, raising the cover, looked for some time at the dead face.

"Heroic youth," he exclaimed, breaking into soliloquy, "how vain was your friendship! For Ida I gave

up my life, but it was too worthless a sacrifice: they demanded more, and I gave up my honour. Why Ishmael, did you preserve the one, since you could not redeem the other? As for you, Magdalene was yours in good report and in evil report, in life and in death, had you steeped your hand in murder she would have kissed it." He started upon his feet, and walked hurriedly away, then returning——

"Magdalene," he said, "you may think it harsh and cruel in me to disturb you in the midst of your grief; but the circumstances admit of no delay. There are two ladies at the farm who depart to-morrow for Mayence, after the obsequies of your husband; and under their protection it is intended that you travel. In the course of the journey there will no doubt arise some conversation on the circumstances of your life; and as my name, however woven up with your later history, is altogether unconnected with the fate of Ishmael, let me implore you not to utter the ill-starred sound at all. It would be vain—worse than vain—for I shall never see her more. Do you promise?——"

"Did you hear, Magdalene?" continued he, after a pause, "or are your senses still wholly absorbed by the spectacle before you?" and bending on one knee by her side, he raised, slowly and tenderly, the hood that covered her face.

"Gracious heaven, is this a dream? Ida Dallheimer!" They gazed at one another for some moments. At last Carl rose from his knee: he hesitated, then walked silently away.

"Benzel," said Ida, bursting into tears, "is it thus we meet—and part?"

"We have *not* met," replied Carl, mournfully; "there is now a gulf between us which you will not, and which I dare not overleap. You see me here, and you have heard my words; the tale, therefore is told—told like the whisper of a dream, of which we only hear enough to make us shrink and shudder, although too little to allow us to understand why we do so."

"Your ransom is paid, and you leave this place to-morrow with Madame Dallheimer, for Mayence. It

was my wish to have seen you before your departure : I had many things to say to you—my heart, indeed, was bursting with its fullness ; but now I cannot remember a word."

" Try," said Ida in a broken voice ; " let us not part so."

" It is impossible. Since I saw you last, my life has been like a dream, strange, wild and fantastic ; and it is no wonder that the same visionary character should have been impressed upon my thoughts which pervaded even my actions. I reasoned upon shadows ; I hoped absurdities ; but this night has ended all. I now know my own position. Dead witness, my heart has received your evidence!"

" I witnessed the deed," said Ida, " and your brave and noble efforts to save him."

" They were but a debt," replied Carl. " I was in prison, surrounded by bayonets, and still more impassable walls ; chained like a wild beast, and only waiting for the light of another day to die. It was then that Ishmael, influenced partly by his own noble heart, and partly by the grateful and admirable Magdalene, held out his hand to save me. He took my place in the dungeon, locked my fetters on his own limbs, and bade me be free." Ida suddenly caught the dead man's hand in hers, and pressed her lips to it, with tears and sobs. Carl was agitated. He seemed about to rush towards her, but by a strong effort he resisted the impulse, and folding his arms tightly over his bosom, retired still further into the gloom.

" But all this would have been unavailing," continued he. " Wandering in the court of the prison, shut in by lofty walls, what could I have done ? At that moment, the gentle, delicate, fair, and fragile Magdalene was at my side like a spirit ; she led me by the hand as if I had been an infant, transported me through guards and gates : and at length, through the energy of her woman's will, and the keenness of her woman's wit, I breathed the free air of heaven again." Ida was silent for some moments. It was a stranger who had been the delivering angel of her lover !

"Ishmael was free," said she at last, "you paid the debt?"

"It is true," replied Carl. "I forgot that I was a citizen, and only remembered that I was a man?"

"It was my first *crime*," continued he bitterly; "and even now the fetters are riveting and the axe sharpening for the outlaw Benzel."

"And will they kill you," exclaimed Ida, starting up and clasping her hands, "for such a deed? But how was it executed? who were your companions?"

"I accuse no one." She knelt down again by the side of the corpse, and leaned her face upon her hands.

"And now, Ida," said Carl, "allow me to question in my turn. Why and how are you here!"

"I made my escape this evening," she replied, "by scaling the walls, with the intention of proceeding to Birkenfeld to visit one who was in prison there for my sake. I encountered him, however, riding through the gloom with a troop of banditti; and returning by yonder broken wall, I saw a cruel and cowardly murder perpetrated by his comrades."

"You scaled these walls, you set out alone and at night, to wander through a strange country, filled, as you well knew with desperate men—and all for me!"

"Ida Dallheimer! I did not quite forget what I wished to say to you before parting. It was not so much want of memory, as want of courage that tied my tongue. When I *consented* to live, it was my intention, as soon as I had secured your liberty, to have asked you—to have inquired—I say, to have endeavoured to discover—whether—" he stopped in agitation, gasping as if to recover breath.

"Whether I would consent," prompted Ida, "to become the wife—nay, that would be too high an honour, besides being out of character—whether I would consent to become the mistress of a robber!"

"I thank you, Ida," said Carl, bitterly; "that has restored me to composure. My intention was to have informed you that circumstances compelled me to absent myself from your society for a certain time; and to have asked you whether I might hope, if all was

well with me at the end of the period, to find your affection unchanged. This was one of my dreams: it was dissipated to-night by the sound of a pistol-shot.

"The remains of Ishmael will be cared for; they shall be watched by me—a service I owe to friendship and gratitude. Will you permit me in the meantime to show you the way to Madame Dallheimer's apartment?"

"I will watch myself," said Ida, struggling with her tears.

"It must not be. The night is cold, and you have need of rest; for your journey commences early in the morning. Your presence here, besides, is unknown to the inmates of the house, who are all in bed; and I cannot answer for the consequences, if they discovered that you witnessed the execution." He walked away, as he spoke, towards the door, and Ida followed him.

It was so dark, and the ground was so uneven, that she stumbled almost at every step; yet he did not offer his arm. They at length reached the passage which led to her own apartment.

"Farewell!" said he. He half held out his hand, but instantly withdrew it, as he saw that Ida's hung motionless by her side.

"Farewell!" he repeated. "This episode in your life is ended. Go rest—go sleep; and when you awake to-morrow, think that it was a dream!" Ida remained confused and bewildered for a moment, endeavouring to consider what she ought to reply. When she raised her eyes again, he was gone. She flew to a window of the ruin, which looked into the court; and saw him gliding through the dark like a spirit. Her heart beat madly; her lips half unclosed; but still she hesitated.

"Benzel!" she at length almost shrieked. It was too late. He was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THINKING AND ACTING.

Ida neither rested nor slept that night. When the first transports of Madame Dallheimer at the recovery of her daughter were over, she prudently recommended the wearied runaway to go to bed ; declaring, with many tears, that she would no longer oppose a marriage which seemed to be ordained by heaven. She little knew the agony which this promise inflicted upon her to whom it was intended as a precious balsam. The mother only knew that Carl had escaped, and was wholly unacquainted with the impassable barrier which now existed against his union with Ida.

The reflections of the young lady, it may be supposed, as she lay on her uneasy bed, were of the most harassing nature.

At one time she bitterly regretted her delay in calling him back till it was too late for him to hear ; and she even accused herself of irresolution for not endeavouring to find out the place again where she knew he would remain the whole night watching the dead. At another period in her meditations, she would imagine the circumstance to have been the most fortunate that could have occurred. Why had she wished him to return ? she inquired ; what more could she say than had already been said ? Would the word "farewell" from her lips, or the touch of her cold and trembling hand, have made the parting easier ? Was not the omission rather a kindness even to him ; cutting short at once any lingering hope, any boyish dream, that seemed even to the last moment to have clung about his heart ?

"There was one part of her conduct, however, the thought of which pained and almost maddened her.

Was his punishment—since punishment she believed it to be—not severe enough without the addition of insult? What right had she to add bitterness to bitterness, and convert the rod of iron into a rod of scorpions? For whose sake had he become what he was? For her sake he had lent himself at first to the designs of the banditti; and for her sake, she knew, she felt, he had at last enrolled himself in their number! But how this had come about she could not tell; neither could she comprehend by what madness of reasoning he had succeeded in deceiving his judgment.

If she could but see him, she thought, for a moment, to say, that at the time she had spoken so unkindly in reference to *his* dream she was in a dream herself, and to tell him that she parted, in grief and pity, unmixed with any harsher feeling, she would be *happy*. Convenient word! which means anything but what is.

She rose unrefreshed as soon as it was daylight, and prepared for their departure. An idea had occurred to her which gave some relief to her mind: she imagined, from her knowledge of the character of Carl Benzel, that he would not be satisfied with merely giving orders for their safe conveyance, but would himself see them at least to the frontiers of what was commonly reckoned the country of Schinderhannes. If this should be the case, even though he hung upon their rear, as a distant outrider, she determined, if it could not be done but by her leaving the carriage, to speak to him once more, and to bid him sorrowfully, though firmly, farewell.

This thought amused her for some time; but as the morning wore on she began to get anxious. It seemed as if they were forgotten; and at times an indistinct and tumultuous sound reached her ear from the remoter parts of the building. After a while she became agitated and alarmed. She remarked that the servant had failed to appear with breakfast; and without even a word to her mother, she ran out hastily to see what had happened.

Every thing was in confusion. Men, women and children were hurrying here and there; messengers were coming and going; horsemen galloping, as if for life

and death, across the fields, to and from every point of the compass. While Ida was gazing at this strange scene, she saw the servant-girl approaching her, with much glee in her face.

"Are you not glad, madame?" said she—"you are going away from the farm."

"And is every body else going too?" asked Ida, "that they are making such a disturbance?"

"La, no madame, I see no disturbance, not I ; they are managing as quietly as possible. You must know the master has received warning that the troublesome soldiers and gendarmes, who will never let him alone long at a time, are marching upon the farm, and so it is necessary for him to leave us without ceremony. But should you not like to see your own carriage, which they are getting ready round the corner there? How I should like to ride in such a carriage!"

Ida followed her mechanically. The intelligence was like a death-blow to the hopes she had almost unconsciously entertained. The daring act, in which Benzel had doubtless been the ringleader, had, it seemed, awakened the indignation of the authorities ; the whole country was by this time alarmed ; and if he escaped at all, it could only be by devoting himself to voluntary exile. Before, the question appeared to lie between herself and her lover ; his disgrace had dissolved the close connection between them ; and she only waited for an opportunity to bid him gently and sorrowfully farewell. Now entered the authorities, however, into the scene ; with a view in the distance, through a vista of soldiers and gendarmes, of the guillotine ! This change of circumstances operated a corresponding change in the sentiments of Ida. Carl rose considerably in her estimation—although not so high as her hand ; for to a woman, when her heart is young (which does not depend on the lapse of time), an unmolested bandit may be the object of scorn or hate, but hunted by the police, and hooted by the rabble, he is sure to become a hero.

On turning the corner, she indeed saw her mother's carriage ; and, superintending quietly but zealously, the

operation of preparing it for the journey, Carl Benzel himself.

He bowed gravely, and touched his hat as she approached. This from him ! and to her ! What a mockery !

" You, too," said she—her anxiety contending with a feeling almost of indignation—" you, too, are about to set out on a journey. I *expected* to have had your escort in mine."

" The expectation was reasonable," he replied, " I hoped to have given myself the satisfaction of knowing that you were safe ; but circumstances have put it out of my power."

" You are in danger ? You fly from the persecution drawn upon you by your generous gallantry !"

" It is a mistake. The young widow of Ishmael comes, at the head of a large military force, to demand retribution for the blood of her husband."

" And what have *you* to do with that ?" Carl was silent.

" Speak ! You did not slay him ; on the contrary, you risked your life—for the second time that day—to save him. Why do you fly from his avenger ?"

" Because it is my fate." Ida turned away to conceal her tears.

" You are still angry with me," said Carl, approaching. " This is unjust. I may have reasoned ill ; but it was only because I loved too well. There is now, however, hope that in a few days more I may be able to see you again, and explain to you fully my history since we parted at Aix-la-Chapelle."

" In a few days more !"

" The hope, however, I am bound to say, is but slight. The force of the authorities is strong, and spread like a net across the country ; they have by this time, in all probability, heard that Schinderhannes is preparing to cross the Rhine ; and if so, it will be a trial of speed, as to which body shall reach first the banks of the river. The knowledge of Magdalene, however, I happen to know, is so accurate—for Ishmael having broken his oath, did not stop at a half confidence—that I have no

doubt whatever of our meeting, were it only at the water's edge ; and in that case, my comrades are determined to risk an engagement with the military."*

"Great heaven!"

"The probability therefore is, that many of us will be slain, and many taken. If I escape with life and liberty, you shall hear from me, or see me, even if it be for the last time." Carl, with a slight inclination, hardly amounting to an adieu, turned away as he spoke. There was a harshness in his manner, which reminded her of the night of their former parting ; and Ida paused in a kind of panic. When she raised her eyes to address him he was gone ; the carriage was ready ; the horses yoked ; and Madame Dallheimer just turning the corner, accoutred for the journey, and piloted by the servant-girl.

Ida fled, rather than walked, from the presence of her mother. She coasted along the side of the house ; arrived at the farm-door ; walked in mechanically, and found her way to the hall where the petition of Magdalene had been heard. It was filled with armed men ; among whom were the terrible, and to her still mystic, Wolfenstein, Peter Schwarz, and others, whom she remembered to have seen. Instead of shrinking back, however, she went boldly in.

"The lady has made a mistake," said the baron, with a stern politeness ; "let some one show her to her carriage."

"I am not mistaken," replied Ida ; "my errand is to Madame Buckler."

"She is busy—she is engaged," said some one, impatiently.

"I *must* speak with her—and *shall*!" Wolfenstein immediately strode towards the door where she stood, and with his usual gleesome smile, except in the eyes, motioned her to follow him. At the end of a long corridor, some of the chambers of which were wholly ruined, and let in the day-light, there was one of better aspect, being entire in the walls, and provided with a door.

* This is not exaggeration.

Here the baron entered, without knocking, and Ida keeping close at his heels, notwithstanding the horror and aversion he inspired, found herself in the chamber of Madame Buckler.

The lady was reclining in an arm-chair ; her chin resting on her hand ; her beautiful hair in still wilder profusion than ever ; her zone unclasped ; and her scarlet riding dress covered with mud on the skirts.

"I have brought you a visiter, Liese," said the baron, gaily. She waved her hand with a gesture almost of scorn ; but did not raise her eyes.

"She is out of temper," whispered he ; "it is the way you know with fine ladies ! Well, I shall leave you to wait a change of weather, or else dare the storm as you choose ;" and Wolfenstein, with another bow and smile, retired.

Ida, who was not so well acquainted as the reader probably is by this time, with the identity of the baron and master Johann Bückler, was greatly surprised at the terms of familiarity on which the former stood, or presumed himself to stand, with the lady of the bandit-chief. Matters of more moment, however, now occupied her attention ; and advancing to the sofa, she sat down by the side of Madame Buckler, and laid her hand upon her shoulder.

Liese started and looked round.

"Forgive me, madame," said Ida—"but at a moment like this, I cannot stand upon ceremony—" madame had sprung upon her feet, and was flying towards an inner door : but suddenly checking herself in her flight, she wheeled round, and advancing almost as quickly as she had retreated.

"You come to upbraid us!" she cried, in a tone of threatening—"You come to stab me through my husband ! What have you to say ? What do you know ? How dare you pry into things that do not concern you ? Hence—away !" and she shook back her long tresses impatiently, stamped her foot, and waved her hand with a gesture, half of command, half of defiance.

Ida was amazed. The cheeks of Liese, always warm, seemed now red hot ; her eyes flashed lightning ; and the

veins of her neck and temples swelled and blackened with passion.

"I do not know what you mean," said Ida without rising; "I came to insult no one: as for your husband, I never saw him—if you can listen to me coolly, I would fain speak with you:

"You never saw my husband! You never saw Johann Buckler! You never saw the baron Wolfsenstein—"

"Ah!" The truth flashed at once through her brain.

"Liese," said she, "I did not come to insult you—I did not wish to add to your—your—grief;—I was not even aware that—that—"

"Were you not indeed?" said Liese, throwing herself with an affected laugh upon the sofa. "You were not aware that my husband was the famous robber of the Rhine? Or, being so, did you think it strange that he should be obliged to—to—What is that you say?—Did you say—"

"I did not speak.—Compose yourself, madame."

"Had it been in the field! Had it been man to man—steel to steel—pistol to pistol! Had his gripe been on his throat, his knee on his labouring breast, the glare of hate in the victim's closing eye, the froth of impotent rage on his freezing lip!—

"Ida Dallheimer,—and here! What have I said? What do you want? Speak! speak quickly, and be gone!"

"I cannot speak quickly, or you could not understand me. You must be calm; for I will not go till you hear me. O Liese, is it *my* part to insult your grief? Who am I? What is he whom I love as strongly as you love your homicide husband!"

"I do not love him--now!"

"That is untrue."

"It is untrue! It is untrue!" and Liese, throwing her arms round her neck, wept convulsively.

"Why are you here?" said she at last, raising her head. "I have ordered your carriage, and procured

your deliverance free of ransom. What further grace have you to demand from the outlaw's wife?"

"I wish to accompany you in your flight," said Ida; I wish to go with you across the Rhine."

"For what purpose?"

"Benzel tells me that he *must* go."

"And that once in safety over the other side of the river, he is free? But what then? Why would *you* subject yourself to so hazardous a journey?"

"To tend his wounds, if he is wounded; to hasten him in the flight, if conquered; to confirm his firmness, if wavering; to die for him;—to die with him."

"I told him so. Long ago I told him so; but his faith in woman was not strong enough, for the infidel does not seem to have believed me. To grant your request is perhaps to destroy you; to deny it would be to make you destroy yourself. Go and prepare, for we start almost immediately."

"I am ready."

"And your mother?"

"I dare not see her again. If all is well, I shall join her at Mayence; if otherwise, she has lost a daughter."

When it was mentioned to Madame Dallheimer, however, that for certain reasons it was necessary she should proceed alone to Mayence, where she would speedily be joined by Ida, the mother flatly refused compliance. She said she would not enter the carriage except by force; and when one of the attendants put his hand towards her, rather in demonstration than with the purpose of violence, she screamed so loud and shrill as to alarm the very bandits.

At this moment the formidable Schinderhannes himself came near to undertake an adventure worthy of his reputation. Even here he was successful. Madame Dallheimer seemed to soften at his whisper; she approached the vehicle, hesitated again—again he whispered, and she leaped up the steps.

"Au revoir, madame!" said he, as he shut the door.

"Adieu, my dear baron!" and the carriage drove off.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW TO RUIN THE DEVIL.

The rattling of the wheels of Madame Dallheimer's carriage was lost in the half fierce, half melancholy music of a horn, that, swelling from one of the upper windows of the old château, seemed to make the whole atmosphere vibrate. Liese ran to the window.

"No more weeping," cried she to her friend, "there is a sight, that, if your heart beats like mine, will make you forget your mother. Look there," and Ida, gazing through her tears, which were at first arrested by fear, and then dispersed by admiration, beheld the mustering of the band.

Full fifty troopers, who had apparently been waiting with impatience for the signal, dashed gallantly into the line. The horses pawing, and snorting, arching their haughty necks, and lashing their sides with their long, glossy tails, seemed conscious of the purpose of the assembly, and proud of their own station; while the riders, with flashing eyes, and compressed lips, half moulded to a stern smile, looked like men who were determined to brave and defy their fate. All those traits of coarseness and vulgarity, which in a single and pedestrian ruffian so often turn our detestation of the crime into disgust at the criminal, had now disappeared. Each formed only a component part of one fine and romantic picture; and the enjoyment afforded to the imagination was heightened rather than otherwise by the thrill of indefinite fear which ran through the blood.

The scene of the muster was well suited to the men. The hoary ruin from which the spectators looked, flung its shadow upon the array; while now and then in the background, a small cultivated field dotting the unreclaimed and irreclaimable wastes of nature, conferred, by the

contrast; a still more dreary and savage aspect upon the country than if all had been wilderness. In the distance the view was shut in by the forest-crowned steeps of the Hobe-Wald.

Among the men, individually, were seen many figures, which might have been chosen with advantage for studies by Salvator Rosa ; but even those who in ordinary circumstances might have passed for ordinary characters—and of such is formed the majority even in the ranks of banditti—were elevated to the poetical by the mere fact of association. All were armed with sword, carbine, and pistols ; and some had two or even three pairs of the last-mentioned weapon disposed about their breast, in addition to those that were stuck in the belt. Peter Schwarz was in the line, at the head of the troop, mounted on a heavy black stallion. He was taller by the head, than any of his comrades ; and, with his bare neck and breast, his coat sleeves turned up to the elbows, and his matted hair and long black beard, he looked like some giant of the old romance. In front of the line sat Carl Benzel on a beautiful bay steed, the mettle of which he scarcely attempted to control. He was evidently plunged in thought, and remained so mute and motionless in the saddle that he might be said to resemble the statue of a man seated on a living horse.

" Why is he there ? whispered Ida, pressing the arm of her companion so fiercely that she started with the pain. " He is not the leader ? "

" He is chosen doubtless for the aid-de-camp of Schinderhannes."

" Alas, why ?"

" Not because he is brave, for that are they all : but because he is cool in danger, quick in thought, and, above all things, unknown to the gendarmes. But see !" it was Liese's turn to press the arm of her friend ; and

* The converse of this fact being generally held, it may be proper to say that the author does not speak at random. His opinion is founded upon personal observation of criminals, both in this country and on the continent. He has seen for instance a gang of desperados working in chains at the arsenal of Venice ; and he can declare that he never beheld a more quiet and respectable looking body of men in his life!

her eyes flashed, her cheeks glowed, and her heart beat audibly as Johann Buckler himself rode calmly into the arena.

The mock baron, whom Liese had hitherto seen in the costume of a man of fashion, carried a knapsack on his shoulder, and was attired in a short jacket buttoned up to the throat, with Hessian boots, and a travelling cap. His arms consisted of a sword hanging by his side, a carbine slung upon his shoulder, and a single pair of pistols stuck in his belt ; but besides these, he carried in his hand, like the baton of a field-marshall, a small iron lever, called, in the slang of the outlaws, the *schocher*, as the symbol of his office.

He was rather tall than otherwise ; but his figure was slight and genteel, and in this dress he looked so extremely youthful that Ida, when his back was turned towards them, could scarcely recognize his identity with the baron Wolfenstein. In his face, however, there were the marks of time, not indicated in lines or wrinkles, but in the shades of anxious thought, mingling with the proud stern look of habitual command. The features seemed even finer than she had supposed them to be, although she had always allowed them to be handsome ; but this was doubtless owing to their expression having now lost the tone of frivolity which had displeased her eye in the baron.

Buckler, without wasting time, like other commanders, with the exercise, proceeded at once to inspect the arms of his men ; who each loaded his *schnelles*, or pistols, under the eye of the chief. He then indicated briefly the *kochemer beye* where they were to be in *viantaff* ; or in plain English, the rendezvous where the expedition was to assemble finally ; and having given the words for advance or retreat, he shouted gaily——

“ Away, ye sheep-faced wolves !” each by his own route. Bleat as ye scour along, that the lambs of the flock may follow your voice. Away my gentle younglings, and take care that the old bellwether does not reach the pen before you !”

A wild hurrah rose from the men, as the line was broken up. The horses danced and curveted for an in-

stant, each endeavouring to free himself from the mass ; and then, striking their heels into the ground, the whole dashed away in different directions, as if scattered by a tempest over the face of the earth. Buckler stood for some time looking after the spectacle, with a sparkling eye, and a swelling breast, till, one by one, the whole troop had sunk into the hollows, or disappeared in the woods with which the country was intersected.-

" This makes amends for last night !" muttered he— " Who would take them to be the hang-dogs they are ?" Two men now rode forward from behind the building, each leading a horse saddled for a female.

" Whose is the second ?" demanded Buckler—" Have we two heroines ?"

" I do not know," replied one of the men ; " it is the order of my lady."

" Obey then, to the death. She is unacquainted with the country ; but in all other things a match, and more than a match, for any one of you. Take care that I do not set eyes on either of you alive without her !" He then turned to Carl, who was still gazing towards the distance, and wholly unconscious of everything around him.

" Come, Benzel," said he, " no more dreaming ! I have no cause, at least, to be dissatisfied with the decision of the band, since it gives me such an sid-de-camp as you. Come, cheer up ! In spite of that ominous brow, which is written black with prophecies, you will outlive these days, and once across the Rhine, you shall grasp for the last time the hand of Schinderhannes ! Come—give bridle ; away !" and the two strange comrades, starting off at a vigorous trot, were soon out of sight of the farm.

Carl remarked that his friend, till after they had journeyed several leagues, made no scruple of entering the villages they came near, where he was at once recognized by the inhabitants. Some of them made haste to get out of his way ; but most of the men, and *all* the women saluted him as he passed ; while the buzz ran from mouth to mouth—" Schinderhannes ! Schinderhannes !"

"Is not this needless risk?" asked Carl.

"Not at all—I know my ground, and my men. All these are friends ; some for love, some from fear, some from gratitude. The bold outlaw is always in favour with the poor, whom he has no motive to make his enemies. Besides, I have business in this place which you do not observe ; nor is there any necessity for your doing so, since your term of apprenticeship is so near a close." Carl's mind, at the time of his initiation, had been in such a state of confusion, almost amounting, indeed, to absolute insanity—that he now remembered the forms and signs that had been explained to him as dimly as if all had been a dream. He did not recollect distinctly even the terms of his oath, which lay heavy, yet indefinite upon his soul, as the nightmare bestrides the imagination.

Now, however, that his attention was recalled to the circumstances, he detected the sign which signified recognition and indisputable command ; and heard his companion utter in a low voice, "Midnight—the Soon-Wald."

At these words, the labourer left his spade, which he was just raising with its load, from the earth ; the ploughman forsook his team in the middle of a furrow ; the mason descended the ladder, after he had nearly reached the top, with his hod full of mortar on his shoulder ; the blacksmith, in the midst of a blow, allowed his hammer to drop, forceless, on the anvil ; the porter set down his load in the street and left it.

They stopped at a small public house, where two gamesters were engaged at the dice.

"I am a ruined man!" cried one—"You have won ten dollars of me ! My fate is already decided beyond hope ; but fling your throw, that the game may be perfect."

"Thank God!" said the other, in a voice trembling with eagerness as he rattled the dice—"By the holy saints, I will never play again, for this will set me up!" —At that moment his eye caught the sign ; and turning deadly pale, he threw down the dice-box, and rose from the table.

At another time, they knocked at a cottage by the road side, but there was nobody within.

"They are at church," said an urchin who was playing on the steps ; and Schinderhannes, rode up to the village church, and looked in at the door without dismounting. A wedding was going forward, and the priest had just arrived at that part of the ceremony which ties the indissoluble knot. At the noise of the horse's hoofs at the threshhold all turned round ; and the bridegroom, leaving his half married wife at the altar, ran out.

"When ? Where ?" said he in a voice of despair.

"Midnight—the Soon-Wald ;" and the horsemen spurred on.

At another time, they dismounted at a house, where there was a woman in the last agonies ; and in the act of receiving the viaticum. The son, with clasped hands and pale lips, was weeping by the bed side ; but when a stranger walked in and he saw the fatal sign, he left his mother to die.

"When ? Where ?" said he, sobbing.

"Midnight—the Soon-Wald ;" and the horsemen spurred on.

They had as yet met with no interruption from the authorities ; and Carl was inclined to think that the information received by Buckler must have been false. The latter smiled at the idea, however.

"My intelligence," said he, "comes from one of the magistrates who signed the requisition for the attendance of the military. We are in all probability awaited by the larger force on the banks of the Rhine; while another party has by this time beat the bushes in the neighbourhood of the farm, and is now at no great distance in our rear."

"Then why waste more time in raising the apprentices ? Is it not your best policy to make at once for the river, and cross, wherever you can do it in safety?"

"We must be prepared for all things. If the coast is clear, fifty or sixty of us can cross as easily as one man : if not, we must fight ; in which case the apprentices will be indispensable to create a diversion. But

softly, here is the town of Kirn, where there may be some risk, and where I have at present no business. I must enter, however. There is at least a chance, and perhaps a strong one, of my never reaching the right bank of the Rhine alive : and I know I could not die easily without seeing once more my pretty little favourite town of Kirn, where I have not been since—since—" He stopped abruptly, and his brow grew as black as midnight.

"Benzel," continued he, coldly and sternly, "you may, if you prefer it, go round by those fields to the left, where you can ford the Hohnenbach, and await me on the opposite side." He then spurred his horse fiercely, and rode at full gallop towards the town. Carl hesitated for a moment ; but, impelled by strong curiosity, he at length dashed after his comrade.

When they entered Kirn, they found it was market day ; and it may be supposed that two armed men, riding at full speed through the crowded street, must have caused no ordinary sensation. Buckler did not stop till he reached the market place ; but then, suddenly checking his horse, he looked round with an air that seemed strangely compounded of shame, and triumph, and disdain.

"Benzel," said he, "on this very spot," and he smote with his riding-whip a large post that stood in the centre of the market-place,—"on this very spot was born Schinderhannes, the Robber of the Rhine. I talk not of the *man*. The place of his nativity is not worth pointing out : he was brought forth low and base, and abject, and to all appearance destined to crawl, like his fathers before him, to an obscure and humble grave. I talk of the *criminal*. It was here was struck the blow which made him an open enemy of that society in which he had no part from the moment he saw the light. Here was opened to him the career which has drawn the eyes of all men upon him, as if he were some portentous comet rushing through the sky.

"It was here, Benzel, for a mere folly of boyhood rather than a crime—I was held up to the view of many of those very men who now account me, if I can guess

by their stare, an omen and a wonder—as a *thief*. It was here I was scourged, publicly scourged, in the market place of Kirn, on the market day. I am not old enough to forget it—I am not yet twenty-two—" and a quivering of the voice betrayed the speaker's emotion.

" What ho ! " cried he, apparently ashamed of the feeling, " what ho ! do you not know me ! do you forget the poor, abject boy, whose cries afforded you so much amusement ? Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty francs reward to him, who identifies me !" and he drew a purse of silver from his pocket, and fixing it upon the point of his sword, rode madly through the market, shouting " fifty francs reward, to him who dares to say that he ever saw my face!" The crowd gave way on all sides, rushing, struggling, and screaming ; and now some gendarmes, alarmed by the din, were seen running out of the houses.

" Fifty francs reward !" cried Buckler, rushing up to them, and waving the purse in their faces. " Alas for their memories ! they do not remember me. Must I announce myself ! I am Johann Buckler ! do you know the name ? I am Schinderhannes !—the famous Schinderhannes, the Robber of the Rhine ! and opening the bag of money, he scattered the contents among the gaping crowd, and setting spurs to his horse, galloped out of the town.

They rode on in silence for a considerable time, and without extraordinary speed ; for the gendarmes they had seen were on foot, and their own horses, notwithstanding the length of the journey, were still fresh.

" You think me mad, Benzel ? " said his companion, slackening his pace. " Nay, no polite denial ! The fact is, there are more of us in that predicament than one would imagine. Among the rest there is a friend of mine, not a thousand mile distant, who has been stark mad for the last ten days.

" But to be serious, there is something in the aspect —nay, in the very idea—of that little town we have just passed through, which to me is inexpressibly horrible. I know not what demon drove me to Aix-la-Chapelle ; but it was there I learnt, for the first time, the value of

that society from which I was an alien from my birth. Till that fatal moment, my life had passed away in a dream, or rather a succession of dreams: the thoughts and actions of one day forgotten in those of the next. At Aix-la-Chapelle, immersed as I was in dissipation, which to me, by comparison, was almost abstinence, I first obtained a glimpse of the heaven from which my destiny or my crimes had cut me off. I saw Ida Dallheimer, and I was surprised, nay awed, to find myself a close and intimate spectator of a *kind* of beauty which I had never imagined even in my sleep. From your lips I heard, for the first time, sentiments as full of passion as my own, but dignified by a delicacy which I could hardly comprehend. This formed an epoch in my life, a landing place in my history, where I stood still unconsciously to look back.

"I traced back the chain of my destiny, link by link: it ended at Kirn. Before that, there was an improbability, but no impossibility, of my ever forming one of a class of beings for which I fancied—for which I still fancy myself—to have been intended by nature. There commenced the series of circumstances which led me to be what I am.

"Let me explain, since I am in the mood for gossiping, the part I have acted in your adventures since you crossed the Eifel.

"You must know, that from the moment when we spoke in jest of setting out together on a crusade against the famous Schinderhannes, I began to entertain a hankering after you as an *accomplice*. I saw the ruin to which you were hastening, and, judging by myself—for at that time I had scarcely begun to comprehend your refinement—I imagined that when your name and fortune were gone, you would think yourself happy in having a friend like me to take you by the hand. When all *was* over—when you were ruined, and I constrained by actual want of money to leave the town—I still entertained some vague idea that we might meet again in more equal fellowship.

"On my journey towards Trèves, however, I happened, by a singular coincidence, to stumble upon a

paper addressed to the very man whom at that moment occupied my thoughts ; and, changing my plan, I resolved, by means of the mysterious agents I possessed, to give you an opportunity of recovering your lost Ida."

"What paper?" demanded Carl ; "I have never received any."

"I know you have not. It was a hurried note addressed to you by your mistress, and was apparently thrown out of the carriage window. It called upon you for an explanation of your conduct to her ; and indicated the route they had taken."

"My generous Ida!"

"I then discovered that the Dallheimer party were before me ; and meeting with a friend who was no other than the renowned Picard of Belgium, to whom Schinderhannes himself is but a novice*—I sent the note to its address ; and, knowing that Picard was not accustomed to fail in *any* mission, I took measures at Trèves for your reception.

"There I fell in with Madame Dallheimer, and wiled her on across the Hohe-Wald, depositing her and her daughter at the farm ; where I resolved that they should remain till the other characters of my drama were ready for their parts. Fortune, however, fate—or heaven, had determined on its own result, whatever the steps might be on my part. Picard could not find you, for the simple reason that you had already set forth on the journey *without* an invitation ; but he intrusted the letter to one whose true character I had before discovered even when she was sitting in a market stall.

"In the circumstances under which we now met, Liese appeared to me in a new light. The artificial distinctions of society that had shackled even *me* at Aix-la-Chapelle, had disappeared. We were on the desert mountains, where all human beings are equal in rank ; although even there, following the rule of nature like the lower animals, the strong must protect or prey upon the weak. She was unlike your Ida—she could

* See note at the end of the volume.

love me. She was not too high, too good, nor too much the child of the circumstances of education and habit, to love me even in my own character. She was, in short, all my heart panted for—a companion; a friend, a tender mistress; as brave as a man and as quick-witted as a woman; above all things, unacquainted with the conventional terms with which the world chooses to describe the actions of its denizens.

“I married her—after a day’s courtship! To what important results a scrap of torn paper may lead! She confirmed me in my intention with regard to you; but all was frustrated by circumstances over which Schinderhannes himself had no control. You were in the very house it seems where Liese and I had taken up our quarters. That night a mock expedition was to have been sent against the mill, for the purpose of relieving our worthy friend Moritz from the suspicion of the authorities, before leaving, as was intended, this bank of the Rhine; but learning from Kunz Weiner that *you* had already entered the profession, and had robbed him of his horse for the purpose of proceeding to the spot, the idea was given up for the time, and attended by only a few of my comrades, dismissing the rest of the band, I proceeded towards the mill. Had we been in the force originally intended, the gendarmes would have had no chance. As it was, Peter Schwarz and I were taken.

“The deception I practised upon you at first was justified by the exigence of circumstances; but afterwards you were forced into the oath, as the only expedient I could hit upon for persuading the band to save your life. Had the unfortunate Ishmael failed, which was thought to be more than probable, you would have been rescued by an assault. Your now being about to be liberated either from your life or your engagements, which you are aware can be done by the consent of the whole band, but not otherwise, is owing to the tact and prudence of your friend Liese; whose generous devotion to him whom she wrested from the arms of death, in a woman of inferior mind would be merely love. But now my tale is finished, and time it is to be so,

since we can hardly see our way. There is a light gleaming in the distance. Yes, we are now near our destination. Yonder dark spot, hardly visible in the surrounding darkness, is the western angle of the Soon Wald."

When they entered the forest, Buckler gave the *koch-emlochen*, and was immediately answered by a hundred owl-like voices. Further on, a woodman's hut, built at the side of the path, appeared buried in profound repose. The shutters were closed, and the house to all appearance deserted, or else the inmates asleep. Here, notwithstanding, the travellers dismounted, and Buckler having knocked in a peculiar manner, the door was instantly opened, and they were admitted.

The hut consisted of only two apartments, one being entered through the other; but it was evident that the ante-chamber was intended to appear to the public as embracing the whole area. Instead of a door to the inner room there was only an aperture, closed up with turf and boards, and when these were removed by the woodman, our travellers found themselves in a long, low-roofed apartment, dug apparently out of a bank of earth.

The company, consisting of about twenty men, rose to receive them, and Carl recognized among them many of the principal officers of the band. He was surprised to see, however, in such worshipful society, his quondam host of the Fig-tree, Kunz Weiner, and still more so when old Moritz of the mill, who was not even an apprentice, came up to shake hands with the chief.

"What, Moritz!" said Buckler, "are you for crossing the Rhine?"

"No, my dear lad," replied Moritz, grasping him by both hands, "but if you forget your old friends, so do not I. Do you think I could permit you to leave the country without a word of good-by? Besides, the exigence has been sudden," and he whispered in his ear, "do you want money? You know old Moritz."

"Know old Moritz? That I do!" said Buckler, in a voice as soft as a woman's; "that I do indeed! I know him for a true friend, and a stout and bitter

enemy. He has but one fault in the world, and that is——”

“ What, lad, what ? ”

“ He is too fond of the gendarmes.”

“ Ah, you rogue, do you twit me with that still ? Was it my fault if they *would* dive into my cellar without asking leave ? Well, it *was* a curious scene. But what do you think my reflections must have been at the time ? ” asked Moritz gravely.

“ Why you enjoyed the fun, to be sure ! ” cried some of the others gathering round him.

“ I thought I was committing murder ! My heart stopped, my head reeled, and I ran for a pistol to blow out my brains.”

“ Then the gendarmes,” said Carl, “ escaped with life after all ? ”

“ Escaped with life ! What are you talking of ? Why that fall would kill a bullock. You are an ignoramus, sir minstrel ; however I am glad to see you in good hands, for it is to you I owe my life. Had it not been for your exclamation, the trigger would have gone click, and old Moritz would have been in heaven. ‘ They are gendarmes,’ cried you. Ho ! ho ! ho ! what a good joke. I thought it had been Schinderhannes ! ”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed the band.

“ But,” said Kunz Weiner, “ I hold that it was a wrong thing of you, Moritz, even to *think* of taking the life of the captain—a very thoughtless and imprudent thing. Nevertheless, for old acquaintance sake, if our friends should determine on punishing the impropriety with death, I shall take it upon myself to make you as comfortable and happy as possible under the circumstances.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed the band.

“ But in the meantime,” said Schinderhannes, “ it would be a still more improper thing to form a dry judgment on such a jolly old toper as Moritz of the mill. Have you come empty-handed, Kunz ? ”

“ The question is an insult, captain. Empty ? I come empty-handed—I would see thee swing first ! When did Kunz Weiner ever neglect his friend ? and at a moment

like this ! Who knows that I shall ever see you again ? Who knows that in a few hours more the waters of the Rhine may not dissolve the bands of our mutual affection ? I come empty-handed ! ” and the kind-hearted Kunz burst into tears.

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed the band.

“ Who talks of drink ? ” cried Peter the Black, from the further end of the room, as he heard the jingling of glasses—“ Give me some brandy ! ”

“ Not a drop,” replied Schinderhannes, “ till we cross the Rhine.”

“ You had better humour him,” said Moritz ; “ for I never saw him in such a mood before. He looks like a man in a trance ; his eyes seem fixed upon some object invisible to us ; and when I told him to cheer up, and that he would soon be dancing upon the waters of the Rhine—‘ I know it,’ he answered, ‘ for I am called. Hark ! ’ ‘ Who calls,’ asked I, ‘ what do you hear ? What does it say ? ’ ‘ It cries help ! help ! help ! ’ was his reply, and I saw the perspiration rolling in great drops down his brow.”

“ Give him brandy,” said Schinderhannes. “ Give him laudanum, if you have it ! ”

While the company were in the height of their conviviality, Buckler rose from the table to inspect the state of the force out of doors ; and Carl Benzel, who had been at first amused by the scene, but was now shocked by its unredeemed coarseness and vulgarity, was happy to follow him.

“ That unhappy wretch ! ” said Buckler, musing. “ I would for his own sake, that he was not upon, but beneath the waters of the Rhine.”

“ I have heard his story,” replied Carl. “ Can you tell me what has become of his child ? ”

“ I never saw her ; but I have heard that she remains in her native valley ; and, although still very young, that she is one of the most beautiful creatures the sun ever shone upon. Peter, when he committed the deed, fled from the spot, to which he never again returned ; and her friends, collecting the remainder of his property, preserved it for the child, who therefore enjoys a kind of

independence." He still walked on, seeming to avoid rather than seek his associates. It was not totally dark; for although the sky was thickly packed with clouds, there was a full moon behind them, and Carl could see that his friend had sunk into the deepest dejection.

"Benzel," said Buckler at last, stopping suddenly, "you are aware that the engagement of the apprentice expires at the death of the master. If I fall to night, you will be free. Will you—should the event occur—will you be a friend to Liese?"

"May heaven desert me at my last hour, if I be not!"

"She will not be entirely destitute; for there is a secret fund, which she knows of, laid aside on purpose for her. This fund, however, small as it is, I wish to be divided into equal moieties; one half for Liese, and one for—for—"

"For whom?" asked Carl, in strong curiosity. Buckler turned away his head while he answered: "For her who strikes the blow by which I fall, if I fall at all—for Magdalene—for the widow of Ishmael. You will see it done?"

"I will."

"Then let us to action. It is the hour—the night is dark enough. Too-whoo!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RHINE.

The force assembled in the Soon-Wald consisted of upwards of fifty outlaws, and nearly a hundred and fifty apprentices; the latter suspected, in some cases, by the authorities, but all living unmolested in their usual homes, and following their usual professions. A small number of these had charge of the horses, and when the word was given, they separated in different directions.

Among these were old Moritz and Kunz Weiner ; who turned to the right about with heavy hearts.

" He is the flower of the foresters," cried the former, wiping his eyes—" the best and bravest fellow unhung!"

" He had better have stayed at home," Said Kunz Weiner. " What is he afraid of ? Death ? Pshaw ! as if a man could not die on one bank of a river as well as another ! Here he might have been visited in prison by the kindest friends in the world ; and such a crowd of well-wishers would have flocked to his execution, as would have done his heart good to see it. For my own part, I am always for having a man remain where he is comfortable.

The whole of the main body began their march simultaneously through the midnight forest, without any further attempt at concealment. From the nature of the ground, it was impossible that they could be attacked before emerging into the open country ; and, at any rate, the die was cast, and it was necessary to stand the hazard. They *must* cross the Rhine before daylight, with or without fighting ; but even those among them who were the most inclined to anticipate evil, were by this time tolerably well satisfied that the coast was clear. They were continually met by their spies, returning, one after another, from the banks ; and all concurred in stating, that there was not so much as the bark of a dog heard along the river.

The scene of the march was wild and romantic in a high degree. Sometimes they dived into valleys so deep, that in that dark and mystic hour they might have imagined themselves to be descending into the bowels of the earth ; sometimes their way lay along cliffs, which they could only scale by digging hands and feet into the interstices ; sometimes they found themselves on the bald summit of a rock, with only the dark sky above their heads, and the black and formless trees below.

On one of these lofty eminences they observed a change take place, for the first time, in the aspect of the night. The clouds, that had lain still and indefinite on the expanse of sky, heaped one upon another,

so as almost wholly to neutralize the effects of the moon, began slowly to rend asunder, and roll in huge masses along the heavens. A breeze had evidently been born in upper air, although all was calm below. Buckler watched this phenomenon with intense interest ; and when at length the planet-queen rose proudly from her prison, he uttered a cry of vexation and anxiety. Turning round, however, the next moment, to his men—

“ There, my lads,” cried he cheerily, “ does not that reproach us for loitering ! Come, since we have light to run by, let us use it in heaven’s name. I’ll bet a bottle of Rhenish that I am first at the *kochemer beye*. Who takes ?” and he set off at full speed, followed by the whole troop.

The quick tread of so many feet, startling the midnight echoes of the rock, produced a wild and singular effect ; and if the cortège had been seen by any of the peasants, whose little solitary huts appeared sometimes stuck in a niche of the ravine, they must have thought they beheld one of those spectral chaces described in the ballads of their country. Schinderhannes himself took the character of the hunted animal, maintaining his ground gallantly far a-head of the troop, and bounding along with all the grace and freedom of a stag.

They were now within a short distance of the Rhine; although this was not observed in the usual sloping of the ground which takes place near the banks of a large river. This noble stream, for a considerable distance above and below the spot, (not far from the old chateau of Soneck, so called from the Soon-Wald,) is hemmed in by rocks and precipitous hills that only stop at the water’s edge. Although a view therefore was sometimes obtained of the river, disposed as if in a succession of lakes glittering in the moonlight, it was impossible to ascertain whether the banks were clear of enemies.

They at length arrived at the *kochemer beye*; which, in this instance, was the dwelling of a small proprietor ; and the apprentices and the majority of the band being ordered to remain concealed in a wood, Buckler and

Carl Benzel, followed by the rest, proceeded to the house.

"Is my wife here?" demanded Buckler the moment he entered.

"No sir, we have not heard of Madame Buckler," was the reply. The outlaw smote his forehead impatiently; and, while the others rested, began to pace up and down the room.

"They will be here presently," muttered he, "they were in charge of two of the trustiest of the band; and Liese, with the wit of a woman, has the courage of a man." Yet he was evidently uneasy; his walk was agitated; and when spoken to by his comrades, he did not seem to hear.

A scout now came in with intelligence.

"There is something stirring up the river," said he, "two boats loaded with passengers are pulling down the stream."

"Are they males or females?"

"Both: for I could see at least one woman."

"Country people, no doubt, who are desirous of reaching market betimes." Another scout came in.

"There is something stirring on the bank," said he, "I saw a crowd of men distinctly one moment, and the next they had disappeared."

"Any boats on the river?"

"No."

"It is the market-people, who have landed." A third scout came in.

"There is a sound on the road in the distance, like the tread of many men." Another messenger.

"All is clear from the house to the water's edge."

"Thunder of heaven! captain," cried one of the men, "what has come upon you? Why don't you give orders to embark?"

"Let us alone," said Peter the Black; "we are waiting for our wives!" At this ominous speech the brow of Schinderhannes grew as black as midnight.

"Let the apprentices," said he, "move down to the rocks to cover the embarkation; but take care that they have the jungle behind them which communi-

cates with the Soon-Wald. How many boats have you?"

"One large and two ordinary sized ; but the large one would hold the whole party."

"Then let every man, except Benzel, get on board as soon as possible ; but beware shoving off without orders." The rushing sound of the apprentices' feet, and the measured tread of the banditti, as they passed the window, was heard the next minute. Schinderhannes looked anxious but determined. A messenger entered.

"Two men and two women on horseback, are scouring down the valley."

"Thank God ! Now let us go." Another messenger.

"The alarm given at first was without foundation. The road is clear, and so is the river."

"Let us lose no time, however," said Benzel, "we cannot have a better opportunity." The horses were heard to strike their heels into the ground at the door ; the ladies leaped off without assistance ; and already Liese's voice was heard in the hall, demanding—

"Where is my husband ?"

"Here," said the outlaw, throwing himself into a chair as she entered the room. "You have made us wait. I thought you meant to keep your word, and abandon me."

"You were mistaken," answered Liese, submissively.

"Madame Buckler, do you not remember me ?" said Carl, approaching.

"Not now ;" and Liese could hardly restrain her tears, through which, however, darted some flashes of indignation ; "I have thought of you sometimes, and I did what I could to avoid a meeting like this."

"My kindest friend, your thoughts of me were ever like the blessings of the good. That I am here, and thus, was the fault of—"

"Another woman!"—and Liese looked towards the door, with her usual arch smile struggling through the tears that still stood in her eyes. Carl followed the

glance, and was rooted to the ground with amazement on beholding Ida.

The young lady herself was far from being at her ease. Up to the moment when she entered the door her spirits had not flagged. Through a fatiguing ride, that lasted the greater part of an entire day, and was attended by perils of no ordinary kind, the same image was before her mind's eye. She beheld her lover, a fugitive, an outlaw, overpowered by numbers, bleeding on the field, or drowning in the river—a prisoner—an exile—a sentenced criminal, awaiting the axe of the guillotine. Her mission was to save, to sustain, to fly with him, to staunch his wounds, cheer his heart, to watch by his side in the solitude of a dungeon, to sit beneath his feet at the bottom of the scaffold.

How different was this meeting from any one of the pictures that her fancy had drawn! No crowd, no bustle, no hurry, no terror, were visible. It seemed as if she herself had come, at a headlong gallop, to disturb at once the silence of the room, and the serenity of his heart. There was something indeed so grossly indecent in the whole affair, as it now appeared to her eyes, that if she could have run out of the house unperceived, she would have leaped upon her horse, and spurred him back again at a venture.

"Can I believe my senses? said Carl coming forward—"I thought—I understood—that is—"

"Yes, I believe so," answered Ida, at random, and feeling ashamed of herself; and angry with all the world.

"Ida," continued he—"my brain of late has suffered so many whirls that I fear it is not steady at this moment. What do you here?"

"I have only accompanied my friend, to bid her good by."

"You must do it quickly then. There is, I perceive, a matrimonial quarrel going on; but we have no time for such scenes.—My mind misgives me, indeed, that we have lost too many minutes already. Have you a friend to conduct you home again?"

"Oh, I shall find my way back!" and her cheek

flushed, and her eyes filled with tears of pride and shame.

"What, in the name of heaven, do you mean? Alone!—at such a distance from your mother—and a wild country between! It must not be: I shall have performed my duty when the embarkation is completed; and if you will accept of my escort——"

"Oh, I should be so happy!" and her manner changed on the instant—"Indeed—indeed, I should be so happy!" and she shook away the bright drops from her eyes, and clasped her hands, repeating—"indeed, indeed, I should be so happy!" At the moment a messenger rushed breathlessly into the room.

"To boat—to boat!" cried he—"there is a large body of military rushing along shore, under cover of the rocks?"

"Come, Benzel," cried Schinderhannes sternly—"the ladies' will take their own mind of it;" and he rushed out of the room.

"If I embark you safe," shouted Carl, "am I free?"

"No;—not on this side the river; follow, on your oath."

"Farewell, then!—farewell Ida!—farewell!" and he sprang across the threshold: but suddenly returning—

"Ida," said he, speaking quickly, "there is a mystery in your manner which I do not understand, and have not time to inquire into. This, however, is perhaps our last meeting, and the jealous pride of manhood must give way. Beloved of my heart!—beloved in good and ill—in storm and calm! farewell—farewell—farewell!" and bending on his knee, he pressed her hand passionately to his lips, and recommenced his flight.

"Benzel!" cried she, and she sprang after him—"Stop! I am yours! Leave me not behind; for whither you go, there will I go also!"

"Am I awake? Can this be? Recal your senses, my best, my only love! I am a banished man, a beggar, and a vagabond on the earth; I go perhaps even now to deliver myself up either to chains or death!"

" Fly, fly, waste not words—" and she hurried him along. " You are mine, and I am yours ! "

" Not now ; it cannot be—hark ! was that a shot ? "

" No matter—I have the more need to be with you."

" Ida, I *must* fly, even in speaking. Life and death depend on it—my honour, my soul. But stop, I entreat you—stop, ere it be too late ! Your being seen with me will only expose you to insult when I am gone—Hark ! there it begins ! the fire of musketry has already commenced. I shall hardly reach the river before the bayonets are in play. Stop, for mercy's sake—stop, for your mother's sake—stop, for the sake of heaven ! "

" Fly, love, and waste not speech. Go on, for I will follow you. I am yours in good and ill, in peace and war, in life and death. There—our enemies are in sight. They fly along the shore ; how their shots leap along the water ! Your chief is already at the boat—fly, love, fly ! " They gained the water's edge just as the terrified and indignant crew were shoving off. Carl threw his mistress into the midst of the crowd, and then leaping on board, the vessel bounded into the deep water, like some huge animal, and began to drift down the river.

Both parties had fired off their pieces, and both were unable to reload ; the pursuers for want of time, and the fugitives for want of room. The silence, therefore, that succeeded to the launch, was only broken by the tramp of the enemies' feet upon the loose stones of the beach, and by the deep sobs that rose from their labouring bosoms.

By some fatal accident, the oars had slipped overboard in the hurry of embarkation, and were lost ; and although, by using their hands, hats, swords, and even carbines for paddles, the crew were able to give their vessel a direction towards the other side of the broad river, the velocity of the motion depended entirely upon the tide. In this situation they had leisure to observe minutely the movements of the party on the beach ; and knowing that they had no power to impel themselves

beyond the reach of their shot, they awaited their re-loading.

In the mean time the apprentices stood quiet, but not uninterested spectators of the scene, manning the heights that surrounded the spot. Their orders were imperative. They were not to interfere, even by a shout, if the vessel got clear off; but, on the contrary, to conceal themselves as much as possible, if they did not rather commence at once their return home.

The light, by which these various objects were beheld, was as clear as that of day; and the broad and clear waters of the Rhine never reflected in their broken mirror a lovelier moon.

The soldiers reached the place of embarkation while the fugitives were still within pistol shot; and the latter saw, without great surprise, that they were led on by a woman. Magdalene paused for one instant; and her followers, with many imprecations, began hastily to load their muskets; but suddenly starting from her dream, she flew along the beach to a place where the shelving cliffs formed a kind of cavern.

"Here are boats!" she screamed. "Five hundred francs to those who will follow me!" Even without the bribe the invitation would have been accepted; but with it their eagerness was so great, as almost to make them lose its object. Rushing, stumbling, rolling along the rocks, striking at one another as they jostled, and swearing the while the most terrific oaths, they obeyed the call; and with less delay than might have been expected under the circumstances, the two boats were manned and shoved off.

The apprentices, in the meanwhile, were prevented by the intervening rocks from seeing what was going on in the cavern, and could not understand the signals made by their comrades, who were by this time approaching the middle of the river. In vain the master bandit shouted at the extent of his voice—

"Fire upon them! Fire! by your oaths!"

In vain Peter the Black bellowed, in something between the roar of a lion, and the laugh of a hyæna—

"Come down to the beach, ye lambkins, or you will lose the sport!" The apprentices were too far off to catch the words; and when at length Ida and Liese, imagining, in the confusion of the moment, that they were unseen rather than unheard, tore their kerchiefs from their bosoms and waved them in the direction of the cavern, they concluded that both the cries and signals were tokens of triumph and farewell; and in their turn emitted a hoarse hurrah, which rolled like thunder along the shores of the Rhine.

This, for some moments, had as good an effect as a volley of musketry. The soldiers were wholly ignorant of the presence of the apprentices; and although they would not have avoided a conflict with a much larger number of such enemies, who were chiefly peasants and artificers; yet their voices, bursting so wildly on the stillness of the night, and exaggerated by the thousand echoes of the river, struck them with dread.

"Let us return," said one of them, "and reconnoitre."

"Pull away, if you be men!" cried Magdalene.

"Pull back—pull back," commanded another.

"Keep in the lee of the rock!"

"No, no, there is more safety in standing out."

"We shall be blown out of the water if we get within range of their guns." A thousand contradictory orders were given, each of which was obeyed in turn; and in consequence the two boats gained not an inch outwards or inwards, although they drifted down with the tide. The panic, however, was not of long continuance; for Magdalene succeeded in convincing some by explaining in a few words the nature of the force with which they were threatened, while she shamed others by her contemptuous reproaches, poured forth with all her sex's volubility. The boats were again under way; and, although so heavily loaded that the men had barely standing-room, and the rowers could with difficulty use their oars, yet from the unmanageable bulk of the other vessel, there seemed to be scarcely a doubt of their being overtaken long before reaching the opposite bank.

When the apprentices perceived the boats emerging from the rocks, they saw their error too late to repair it; for long before it was possible for them to come within shot, the enemy were too near their friends to admit of their using their carbines without as much risk of injury to the one as to the other. They were thus under the necessity of remaining almost idle spectators of the event ; only dropping an occasional shot as they found opportunity.

As soon as the enemy had fairly put off from the shore, Schinderhannes carefully measured the speed of their boats with his eye, and then turned to his men.

"Comrades," said he, "we *cannot* reach the bank without fighting ; our object therefore is, to gain time, and try to reload our carbines. Every second man from the right gunwale, stoop down at the word of command, while his neighbour loads. Down ! You who are paddling, make use of the current ; strive no more for the other side, but give her way with the stream."

"And now, ladies, you must forward to the bows, or you may chance to get your bonnets flattened."

"Not I !" said his wife; "I can load a carbine as well as any man of you, though I can hardly fire more than a pistol. Give me your cartouch-box. I will stand behind you ; and you shall never want a shot so long as Liese can handle a bullet !"

"No mutiny!"—said Buckler, sternly—"Do as you are ordered."

"I will do my duty. You command men—not women!"

"Make way there!" cried Benzel, leading Ida forward—"let this lady pass to the bows." She went on a few paces like one in a dream ; but suddenly springing back—

"I will not leave you!" she almost sobbed—"Indeed I will not leave you ! I cannot fire, I cannot load, but I will stand by your side."

"Love, this is madness!—The stern of the vessel will be swept by their shot as with a besom. Retire for my sake, if not for your own, that you may be in a condition to assist me when I am wounded."

"Then I will lie down at you feet; the bulwarks of the boat will defend me ; and, if you fall, you will fall into my arms."

All this, although it necessarily occupies some space in the telling, passed in an instant; and then Buckler turned to his companions.

"Benzel and Peter Schwarz," said he—"you will stand with me in the stern. Remember, Peter, if they try to board, that the butt end is your weapon ; and while using it, take care you roar me your most delicate strain. Benzel, you are to fight for freedom and for Ida !—and forget not, should any thing happen, what I said to you in the Soon-Wald. Comrades, do you observe yonder woman, standing in the bow of the first boat ? It is Magdalene, whose husband you murdered, by my hand, last night. Now mark me—if I see but one speck of blood on that woman's dress, by the holy heavens, I will blow out the brains of the first man whose eye I meet ! Do you hear ? By the Three Kings of Cologne, I will !" and drawing a pistol from his belt, he kissed the butt-end.

The enemy's boats were by this time almost within pistol-shot, one behind the other. On the bow of the foremost, the new made widow stood like an avenging spirit. Her dress was disordered ; her neck uncovered ; and her hair, flung back from her brow and ears, and streaming in golden wreaths behind her, gave a fierce and eager look to her face. She stood with up-raised hand, and body bent forward, in the attitude of one about to fix and grapple ; while the extreme youthfulness of her appearance, the dazzling fairness of her complexion, and the girlish beauty of her features, taken in conjunction with such an attitude, in such a scene, might have given one the idea of a supernatural being.

The soldiers in the mean time continued to pull on as steadily as the crowded state of the boats, and their own ignorance of the art of rowing permitted. The event of the chase was no longer doubtful ; they gained upon the fugitives at every stroke ; and already the few who had been able to reload, began to level

their pieces for a proper aim, and those who were next the side brought their muskets, with fixed bayonets, to the charge, to be ready to board.

These preparations were not unobserved in the fugitive vessel.

"Now, comrades," cried Buckler, "remember every shot must tell; for we shall have no time to reload, before they are upon us knife to knife. Look at them, my men; don't be in a hurry. Now, steady! Present! Fire!"

Two soldiers were observed to drop from the gunwales of the foremost boat, and a stir took place in the middle of the crowd, as if some of them had been wounded. The bandits uttered a loud hurrah, which was echoed by their accomplices on the rocks; and the sound was carried on by the echoes of the Rhine till it died away in the distance.

The enemy, however, were not so much injured by the loss as the delay. It required some time to pick up the two men, who were dying by the double death of wounds and water; then the two boats ran foul of each other, and some moments more were spent in extricating themselves. But they had been taught a lesson by which they did not fail to profit. Knowing the impossibility of the fugitives making the shore without their permission, they turned their attention methodically to the task of reloading their muskets; and as soon as they had made up their lost way, every man who was ready to fire, took aim as he could. The two parties were thus plunging down the current, keeping up a running fire, but the soldiers gaining fast upon the outlaws. The apprentices in the mean time followed the chase along the rocks; howling with delight when a shot told against their enemies, and receiving a contrary manifestation in profound silence.

"Steady!" cried Buckler, "never mind the musketeers; we are used to cold lead. Give it to the oarsmen—give it them home, my boys!" The effect of the blind obedience which the band were accustomed to pay to their chief was soon visible. The oarsmen were disabled; time was lost in changing places with

them ; and the unmanageable barge of the outlaws continued to whirl in triumph down the stream.

They were now at no great distance from a point of land, on the right bank, where the current swept close to the rocks ; and had besides the chance of a village to be passed previously, where several apprentices resided. Their case, therefore, although doubtful, and dangerous in the highest degree, was not desperate. Many of them were still unhurt, the danger being sustained almost exclusively by those in the stern, among whom Benzel and Schinderhannes himself were slightly wounded, and Liese had a small portion of one of her beautiful arms torn away by a bullet.

It seemed curious that the bulky figure of Peter Schwarz, placed up, like a mark on the loftiest part of the stern, should have as yet escaped every casualty. He stood firing and reloading with the most perfect composure, not a gleam of intelligence visible on his features, and was, in fact, to all appearance, profoundly ignorant of what was going on. At length a bullet struck him on the side of the neck, and, awakened at once from his stupor, he turned round with a sudden shout, and stared wildly about him.

"Are we not at Soneck ?" he cried. "What brings us here ? Thunder of God !—why did you not tell me that we were coming *here* ? But it is of no use, it is of no use. You could not help it, it was ordained. A little farther,—there, where the tide whirls in an eddy —there the boat went down. Now fire, ye devils, for the hour is come !" and he turned his eyes upon the pursuers.

As he looked, an expression of horror grew upon his face ; his carbine fell from his grasp ; and he leaned forward over the stern, shaking in every limb.

"I thought it was to be alone !" he muttered, while the words were scarcely audible in the rattling of his teeth. "That was not in the bargain ! I could drown easily, if that look was not fixed upon mine ; take away your eyes—Help ! help !" The enemy were by this time within a few oars' length of the barge. Not a piece was loaded on either side ; for all waited the con-

flict of steel to steel. The too-whoo! had been given by the barge, and answered from the rocks beyond the village which they were now passing.

"He takes her for his wife!" said Benzel. "What ho! awake!" and he shook Peter the Black roughly by the shoulder.

"Am I indeed awake?" said the latter in a whisper, gradually gathering as he spoke into a shriek; "and can the waters thus yield up their dead after sixteen years' safe custody? Let me alone! take away your eyes! Wife! wife!—Magdalene!"

"Mysterious God!" cried Benzel, "she must be his daughter!" The wretched man had leaned far over the stern, and if not held up on either side by Carl and Buckler, would have dropped into the river.

On her side the vengeful glance of Magdalene had changed gradually into a look of the most helpless dismay. She clasped her hands wildly, and bent forward over the vessel. If the daughter of Peter Schwarz, she had never seen her father from infancy, Was it nature, then, that wrought within her the recognition, for such it seemed? There was not time to observe. She had stepped upon the extreme verge of the bow, leaning over as if about in the act of springing; her lips had opened, and a word—no one could gather what—was half pronounced, when the sound of a shot from the shore rang over the abyss, and with a fearful scream, she fell headlong into the river.

"There!" cried Peter Schwarz, "I knew I was called. Stand off, comrades!" and with a mighty effort he dashed his supporters away from him—"Magdalene, I come!" and he sprang overboard with such force, that, although the soldiers had backed water the instant their conductress fell, his head struck against their keel, and reddened the waters around it.

The barge of the fugitives was carried away by the current, and before their enemies were clear of the scene of death, was dashed against the rocks, which the crew laid hold of as they passed. A few of those next the gunwale leaped ashore on the instant, and loading their pieces, covered the disembarkation of the rest.

The soldiers, after one more gallant attempt, found that the case was hopeless, and stood out for the middle of the stream.

No shout of triumph was uttered by the banditti. The enemies parted in dead silence, and the cry of the apprentices, who could not have observed the catastrophe, booming faintly and mournfully over the waters of the Rhine, was the only sound that celebrated the obsequies of Peter the Black, and the lovely and hapless Magdalene.

CHAPTER IX.

SHOWING HOW THE STORY ENDS.

The outlaws, being now in another territory, were comparatively safe ; yet the presence of so large a body of armed men could not be viewed with indifference by the authorities. They separated, therefore, in small groups, fixing on a *kochemer beye* further up the country ; and Buckler and Carl Benzel, with Liese and Ida, found themselves sitting alone in the shade of a wood near the river.

The master-outlaw had loosened his belt and laid down his knapsack on the ground, as if determined to enjoy some relaxation ; but his brow was dark, and a cast of care, spread over his countenance, gave to the features of a young man of twenty-two the appearance of at least middle age. Ida had bound up the wounds of Carl Benzel, and still retained the hand locked in hers, on which she had exercised her surgery ; while Liese, having performed the same office for her husband, and tied a handkerchief round her bleeding arm, sat apart from the rest, meditating, as it seemed, with mingled sorrow and alarm, on her unhappy fate.

"Benzel," said Buckler, "you are now free. With the permission of my comrades, I release you from the

oaths, which you took for the sole purpose of saving your mistress from dishonour."

"I thank you!" replied Carl. "God knows I thank you!" He leaned his forehead upon the shoulder of Ida, and she alone remarked the single tearless sob that convulsed his bosom.

"What are your plans?" continued the outlaw. "You cannot return to the left banks of the Rhine, for you are now a marked man. Your person will be described at all the public offices throughout the country; and if you are taken, the guillotine will be your fate."

"I have no present thoughts of returning," said Carl, rallying; "but even with the comfortable prospect you have suggested, my heart is light, and my soul thankful. I am free!—and Ida is with me."

"You have nothing," said she, in a low voice, and casting her eyes on the ground,—"nothing to bind you to the left bank of the river. We should both consider this to be a new world; in which, acting by our past experience, we might hope to be at once better and happier. I will write to my mother, and I have no doubt that she will join us on this side of the river. My fortune, it must be confessed, is in landed property, and, in some measure, under her control; but, seeing the irrevocable step I have taken, I am sure she will consent to its being sold."

"That must not be," said Carl. "It would be ruinous in disjointed times like these."

"And what matter? We are young and strong, and we can work for what is wanting!" The outlaw started up.

"Nay, you must not leave us," cried Benzel. "Did you not hear her, Buckler? Surely you will not allow her words to stop at your ear, without sinking into your heart! Why continue to waste the talents and the energy with which heaven has endowed you, in a hopeless war against society, hopeless, because success would be your greatest loss? Why allow the noble qualities of your heart to run to seed, unappropriated and unemployed, in the fellowship of russians who would hate if they

could understand you? Join us, Buckler! we will retire still farther off into the world, where your name is unknown; and by manly industry achieve an independence which Schinderhannes can never know." A gloomy smile lighted up the features of the outlaw.

"And is this the ending," cried he, "that you propose for your romance? Do you still think me the baron Wolfenstein? or do you imagine me to be some hero of your fancy, whose very nature you can mould, change, and re-cast at your pleasure? Even supposing that that society, of which I have been the bitterest foe, were to open its arms to me; supposing that my fellow-men, whom I have injured and insulted, were to forgive and bless me; that the blood of Ishmael, and every other drop that I have shed, were to disappear in the ground; supposing that the princes and nations of the earth were to offer me riches and honour, armies to command, and provinces to govern---what then? Should I not still remain the same individual, subject to the same passions, controlled by the same prejudices, and fettered by the same habits?"

"You think that I have no pleasures, no moments of enjoyment! Do you set for naught, then, the pride of power, the gratifications of vanity, the glory of revenge? You have only seen the worst of my way of life. But even were this not the case, it is the only life I am fit to lead. I was born for it—I was born to it; and I can no more change my profession than I can change the country of my nativity. As a man of society, I should be worse than an outlaw; I should expend my restless energies in meaner vices, and perhaps have recourse at last to the vulgar excitement of intoxication."

"No, no. I must still wrong, and writhe up against the wrong of the oppressor; I must still pursue and be pursued; I must still slay till I be myself slain. Farewell, Benzel; farewell Ida Dallheimer. I leave you to a brighter, happier fate than mine. I shall often think of you in those moments when I think at all; and I shall hope that even you will not wholly forget one who never can and never would resemble you; who never will be

more—but never less—than Schinderhannes, the Robber of the Rhine!"

As he turned away, he threw a glance upon Leise, who was weeping where she sat, with her face buried in her hands. He then looked at Benzel and Ida, but they could not tell with what expression, for he wheeled instantly round, and walked hastily away.

"What does he wish us to do?" whispered Carl.

"To save her!" and Ida ran to her friend, and threw her arms round her neck.

"Liese," said she "you at least are not wedded by birth or habit to a life of guilt and terror. To leave your husband—which he desires himself—will be to break one moral band that you may keep entire a thousand. Come with us, be our friend and sister, and share with us alike in our wealth and poverty."

"Where is my husband?" cried Liese, starting up.

"He left you to our care."

"It is false!—Forgive me, dearest lady, I feel your kindness—but—but—where is he?—and she wiped her eyes hastily with her arms, and arranged her beautiful hair.

"You do not mean it"—continued she—"O, no; you could not mean to tell me that I ought to leave my husband! What, now? when he is a fugitive, a wanderer! with no one to watch him when he is asleep, and speak cheerfully to him when he awakes—to dress his wounds—to—to—As I live, his very knapsack is forgotten! Would you have me leave it there? Duty! is it not my duty to carry my husband's knapsack?—Shame! shame!—dear lady, pardon me. Farewell—God bless you!" and they embraced with tears.

"And you too, Carl Benzel—there—it is not the first time you know! Farewell! farewell!" and the young, beautiful, high-spirited, and high-hearted Liese, throwing the knapsack over her head, walked away after her husband.

They saw them again at a turning of the road. The knapsack was on the shoulders of Buckler, whose arm was round Liese's neck, while her's encircled his waist. The wanderers turned round, and signed an adieu, with

out disturbing the arrangement ; and then entering a clump of trees, they faded from the eyes of their friends, who saw them no more.

The time has now arrived when it is usual for the moral to be spoken, and the curtain dropped. We have no moral to speak. We have presented a succession of pictures of what we believe to be human nature ; although human nature placed in-strange and out-of-the-way circumstances ; in which the conduct, if truly set down, is commonly supposed to be unnatural. Our personages, although, for the most part, real characters, and painted, so far as we could do it, in their real colours, have as yet no place in history. A biography, therefore, would have been useless, and biographical accuracy, in a romance, is never well appreciated. Our sole purpose was—(and we fear there is some boldness in confessing it)—to amuse—to interest—to excite the sensibilities—and to fill up the heart during one of those so called idle moments in which, for want of better employment, it preys upon itself. If we have succeeded, we are happy ; if not, we shall try to do better the next time.

It would give us pleasure to conform to the old rule of romance, and satisfy that curiosity, on the subject of the persons of the story, which the sanguine author always imagines he has excited. Our persons, however, as we have said, are not fictions but realities ; and it rarely happens, except in fairy tales, that we can say of any body, “ he then lived happy all the days of his life.”

As for Carl Benzel and his faithful Ida, all we have further to tell is, that Madame Dallheimer consented very cheerfully to their union ; and although she was not guilty of the folly of selling the property, yet she placed them in circumstances which enabled them to live genteelly, without having recourse to the boasted industry of her daughter.

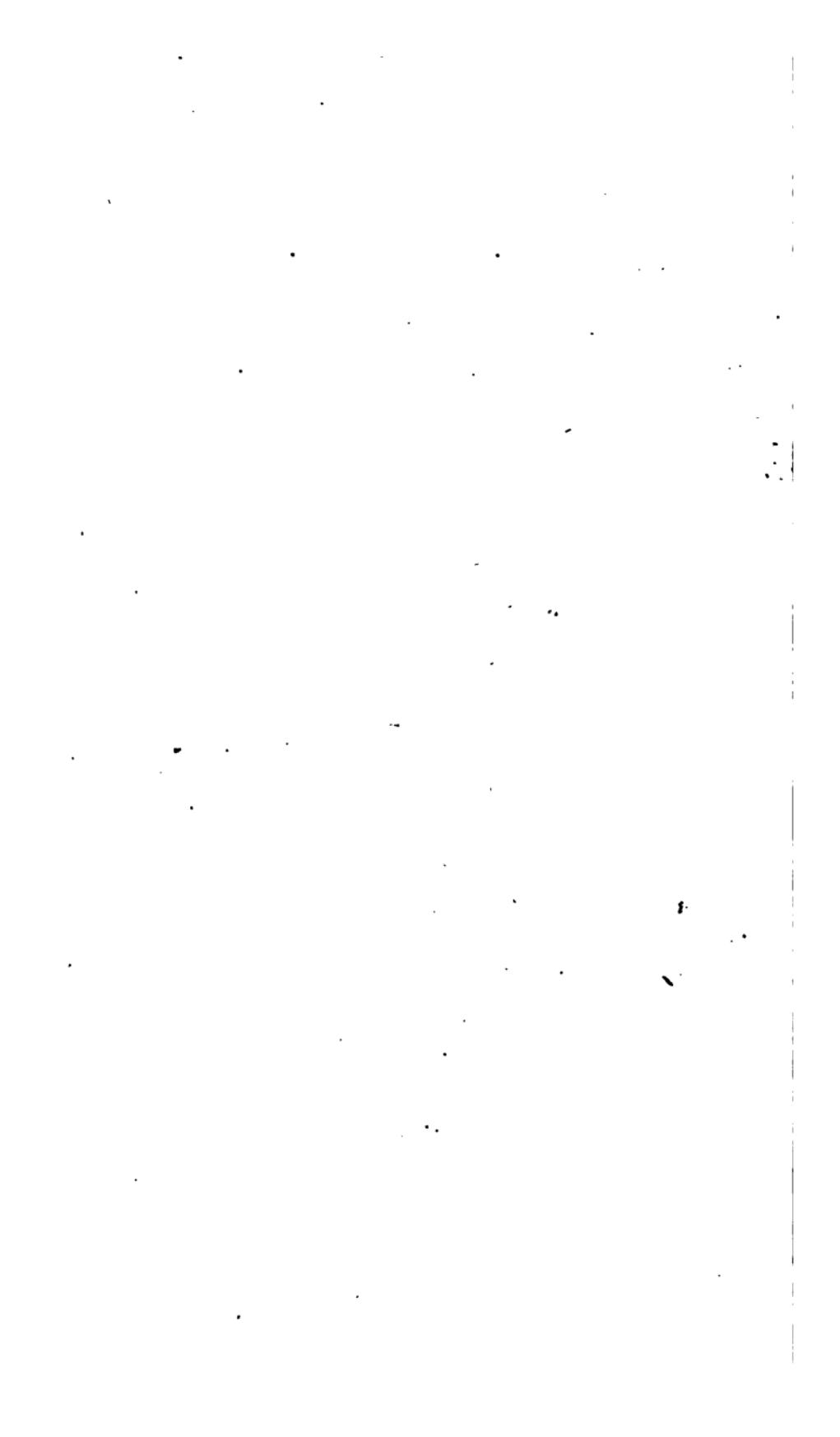
Old Moritz of the mill lived to a good old age, enjoying at once the friendship of the banditti and the patronage of the government. He never ceased, so long

as his tongue could wag, to entertain his nightly guests with the tale of the forcing of his premises by the police ; and he laughed to his dying hour at the quandary he was in when he thought that, in a moment of passion, he had slain the famous Schinderhannes—when, lo, and behold, the victims were a few gendarmes !

In the flight from the farm, Leah and Adonijah were either purposely omitted by Buckler, or accidentally forgotten ; and when they heard of the departure of the rest, they borrowed horses, and set out alone to follow, being too closely connected with the band to remain behind with safety. On the way, however, the strength of old Adonijah broke down ; and his daughter—the murderer of Ishmael—who might easily have escaped alone, surrendered herself into the hands of the police, rather than leave her father. They were tried soon after at Mayence, and condemned to fourteen years of fetters, without having been guilty of the smallest treachery to their quondam comrades. Kunz Weiner travelled all the way from the Fig-tree to bid them good-by. He commiserated the case, more especially, of old Adonijah, who was leaving the neighbourhood of his sympathising friends, for no other purpose than to die ; and he even whispered to the daughter, that, if she thought it would not be intruding, he would bring a little arsenic with him at his next visit, and administer it himself, in the most kind and comfortable manner.

The fate of Schinderhannes is detailed in the note ; and from the circumstance of another Madame Buckler being mentioned, the reader may conclude, if he pleases, that Liese did not live to witness it.

NOTE.



NOTE*.

THE ROBBERS OF THE RHINE.

AMONG the gay and fashionable who haunted Aix-la-Chapelle for the sake of relaxation, were many individuals who, in their working hours, followed a calling which in England we know nothing about. A wealthy Dutch merchant, or a German baron, with a pedigree as long as the great sea-serpent—or both together—would honour the city of Charlemagne with their presence, accompanied by their wives, and daughters, and sons, and nieces, and a whole tribe of servants. The shopkeepers rub their hands ; the water-drinkers are thrown into a flutter ; ladies' hearts begin to pal-pi-tate ; and old bachelors hasten to drill their eyebrows, and count the crowfeet at the corners with nervous trepidation.

The anticipations of all are realized. The strangers buy freely, and pay in hard dollars : they keep open house, play a high game, win or lose, as luck orders it, with a good grace. Their womankind play on the guitar, and look unutterable things :—

Sweet harmonists !—and beautiful as sweet—
And young as beautiful—and soft as young !

They make people delightfully unhappy, and form a hundred liaisons—all platonic of course.

This goes on for some time ; perhaps a month passes by like a jour de fete—when suddenly an awkward whisper runs through the town. The Aix-la-Chapellians rub their eyes ; resemblances are detected, and coincidences examined ; then government couriers arrive ; the authorities are thrown into confusion ; all business is at a stand ; and, as every body knows that the matter cannot go on so for another day, the whole population wait for the morrow in an agony of suspense.

The strangers in the meantime *go*, and the morrow *comes*. They have vanished like so many spirits, and

* From "Travelling Sketches on the Rhine, and in Belgium and Holland."—(*Picturesque Annual, 1833, by the author of Schinderhannes*).

Like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a rap behind.

How could their passports have been viséed. It is answered that the mayor had a friendship for the merchant's wife, and the commissary of police was about to be married to the baron's daughter. Could these functionaries have seen that the passports had been previously falsified? No: because love is blind. In a day or two after the travellers are safe at home; and the bold outlaws, who had merely visited Aix-la-Chapelle for amusement, may be met scouring the forest at the head of their troop.

Alas, we know nothing about such matters in England. Even the race of the Macheaths is extinct—gallant but insignificant fellows! who were once to be seen “alone, unfriended,” spanking along the highways on a blood mare*. A stage, flying at the rate of ten miles an hour, would laugh to-day at their “Stand and deliver!”—and a steam-coach would have ample time to get beyond the range of their pistols in the interval between the flash and the bullet. We must now put up with being knocked on the head by a pitiful foot-pad, or having our purses seduced by a sneaking cowardly pickpocket. We defy the world, indeed, in spinning cotton, and making pins; but in robbery, there is not a paltry German state that does not beat us hollow. It was doubtless in reference to this stain upon our character, that Napoleon called us, contemptuously, “a nation of shopkeepers.”

Towards the close of the French revolution, the banks of the Rhine, and the surrounding country from Holland to Mainz, were the theatre of exploits as strange and wild, and the haunt of men as extraordinary, as any that are exhibited in history. The French laws were not yet in full operation in Belgium, nor the conflict of opinions and parties at an end. Every thing was in confusion. The very elements of society seemed to have been broken up and disorganized by the moral earthquake that had occurred. A lawless and reckless spirit pervaded all ranks of people, and made room, in individual cases, for the development of talents and energies that, under ordinary circumstances, would have continued to slumber in embryo.

Energies so called up must, like spirits summoned by sorcery, be evil in their nature; and accordingly a reign of terror commenced, scarcely less extraordinary than the events of the revolution itself. From Belgium a criminal could easily pass into Holland if pursued, or into the countries bordering the Rhine; and there the minute subdivisions of the Germanic confederacy

* We have the misfortune to differ on this point of chronology with two French magistrates, who have drawn up, from judicial documents, an account of the crimes of the renowned Schinderhannes and his comrades. They write thus in 1810. “No one ignorant that in England—an island in which the highest civilization conjoins with the darkest barbarism—the profession of highwayman is exercised almost as publicly and securely as any other. If it is not always attended by bloodshed, the reason is, that travellers, for fault of legal protection, enter cheerfully into a composition with the ruffians.”

tion, in which each petty prince maintained a jealous independence of the rest, rendered pursuit almost useless. The policy, therefore, of great criminals, in their choice of localities, will be easily comprehended.

But, as the genius of individuals began to gather together the elements of lawless power, and unite the various little roving bands in one compact society, it was seen that the magnitude of the mass would force the alarmed governments into a league against them, and that thus their very strength would prove their destruction. How to obviate this difficulty was the question—how to increase rather than diminish their numbers, and to tighten rather than relax the bond of union, without presenting any tangible surface to the authorities; and, out of the speculations on this knotty point, there arose at length one of the most remarkable associations that are mentioned in history.

Few of our readers, we believe, are acquainted even slightly with the subject; and, connected as it is with the localities through which we have just been wandering, it will be considered, we hope, no unacceptable service if we now proceed to give some account of the laws, institutions and customs, of the remarkable and mysterious banditti to whom we allude.

The known and ostensible members of the band were diminished in number, rather than increased, by the new constitution. These, under the captainship of some individual raised to the post by his courage or talents, inhabited as their headquarters an old castle or ruined mill; or pitched their wandering camp in the recesses of a forest. It was, in fact, easy to find a harbour capable of accommodating a much larger force, in times when so many country families had fled for refuge, from the horrors of war, to the more populous and protected towns. The roads between town and town were for the same reason comparatively deserted, except by travellers and merchants; and the villages cut off from all peaceable inter-communication.

Having fixed upon a camp, or rendezvous, the next important step was to secure the safe passage of the bandits through the territory, by establishing every where a line of posts, affording succour and shelter in case of need. This was easily arranged by enlisting in the cause the more needy and desperate of the inn-keepers and aubergistes. Some of these, in the country parts, had been left helpless and alone, like stranded barks, by the ebbing tide of population; and, as their profession at any rate is not suspected of predisposing strongly to honesty, they were found in general to enter *en amore* into the proposals that were made to them.

In the slang of the robbers—a jargon compounded of Hebrew, High and Low German and French—these places of refuge were called *kochener-beyes*, whether public-houses or not; and there a member, when pursued, was sure of protection and advice; and his address, or that of the band, was always to be procured by those who wanted it for a friendly purpose. To such perfection had this system been carried, that it is under-

stood that a robber could travel from the farther extremity of Holland to the Danube, with the certainty of spending every night in the company, or under the protection of friends.

In numerous cases, also, the functionaries of police, from the magistrate down to the lowest officer, were in the pay of the band; and it was frequently observed that the anxiety of a robber, taken even in the fact, was at once dissipated, as if by a magic spell, on the name of the worthy being announced before whom he was about to be carried.

Names, dress, character, complexion, and feature, were changed with wonderful facility, by these intelligent and industrious persons. Our Dutch merchant and German baron are specimens. As for the passports, they were managed entirely by the womankind, who had a great talent for business.

The persons we have described, however, were few in number, perhaps not more than a dozen men and their families. Where, then, were the banditti who kept the country in terror? —who, amidst the noise of fire-arms that was heard over half a province, carried villages and even towns by assault, and either plundered them of their movable riches, or held them to ransom at the point of the sword? In the villages, in the towns themselves, in isolated farm-houses, in obscure or remote inns, were domiciled these mysterious freebooters. These were the body, and the former the soul; these the executive, and the former the legislative power of this invisible state. The former were the chiefs and their immediate attendants; the latter, the great mass of the band, distributed over the face of the country, inhabiting their own houses, working at their own trades or professions, yet ready, at a signal understood only by themselves, to vanish from their homes and families, and follow, wherever they were led, to the death.

They were called apprentices. They were bound to the society by the most tremendous oaths—which they were rarely tempted to break, well knowing that an invisible dagger hung over their heads, which was sure to descend even on a suspicion of their falsehood. A miserable wretch, who had been taken by the police, and securely lodged in a dungeon, once revealed, in the agonies of his terror, the rendezvous of his chief—the famous Picard. The next night, while reflecting in horror that, even by his treachery, he had probably been unable to save his life, he heard his name pronounced in a whisper; and, looking up, saw an arm passed between the iron bars of the window.

“Who art thou?” inquired the robber, trembling.

“Thy master—Picard; I have ventured my life, as in duty bound, to set thee at liberty!” In a few minutes his irons were sawed off, and one of the bars wrench'd from the window-frame; and, following his conductor, he scaled the wall, and scented the free air of the neighbouring forest. The band were ready to receive them, drawn up in a semicircle, and standing under arms, in dead silence. Their delivered comrade was placed in the middle.

"*Schleicher!*" said the chief, addressing him with the slang epithet for traitor; "didst thou imagine that the word of treason would be unheard by Picard, because it was whispered in the depths of a dungeon? Die, coward, in thy guilt!"

"Mercy! mercy!" cried the wretch, as the pistol touched his ear—"Give me death, but let it be in battle! Lead me on this very night, were it to the attack of an army, and let me die upon the bayonets of the foe!"

"It must not be," said Picard calmly; "thou art unworthy of the death of the brave. Comrades! shall the laws of the band be set aside in favour of a hound like this?"

"No!" growled the deep stern voice of the lieutenant; and the word was echoed by some in cruelty, by many in dismay, till it died away like a prolonged groan in the forest. The white lips of the coward closed at the sound: and a bullet passing through his brain at the same moment, quieted his fears for ever.

Another story is told at Aix-la-Chapelle, which does not satisfy quite so well one's ideas of retributive justice. A fine young man of that city was enrolled as an apprentice by the ferocious Jikjak of Mersen, and awaited impatiently the commands of his chief, being desirous not only of distinguishing himself in the career to which his follies had driven him, but of obtaining money enough to enable him to marry his sweetheart. It is not known whether his weakness was owing to love, or wine, or both together; but, unhappily, he divulged, one evening, the secret of his destiny to the terrified girl; and the next morning he was called by Jikjak, in person, to accompany him in an expedition. The youth followed more in shame than fear; inwardly resolving to make up for his harmless treason by gaining that day a character for courage which should command the respect of the whole band.

And yet, as he followed his mute and gloomy conductor, a misgiving, at times, came over him. There were numerous other apprentices, he knew, in Aix-la-Chapelle, and in the villages through which they passed. What kind of enterprise, then, could the renowned chieftain contemplate, in which he desired the assistance of only a single unknown, untried individual? The young man shivered as they entered the black shade of a forest; but, when his conductor stopped suddenly at a new-made pit, resembling a grave, his knees knocked together, and the hair rose upon his head.

"Perjured traitor!" said the chief, "say thy paternoster, for thou must die!"

"I deserve death," replied the apprentice, "yet try me once again! To-morrow the girl will be my wife, and we shall remove—far from her friends and acquaintance—wherever you command! Only try me! I am as brave as thou!"

"Thou hast broken the laws of the band, and therefore thou must die! Down on thy knees!—down!" and with one Herculean arm he bent him, by main force, to the earth, while with the other he raised a hatchet above his head.

"Only hear me!"—

"Reprobate! wilt thou die without a prayer?" The youth submitted; and, by the time the word "Amen," had fairly passed his lips, the iron was deep in his brain.

The apprentices were evenly distributed over the country, and were prohibited from assembling, even at fairs, or on such casual occasions, in bodies of more than three or four. If they were seen by a chief in greater number, a significant sign commanded them instantly to disperse, and disobedience was sure to be followed by punishment. The same policy dictated the choice of distant scenes for their enterprises; and it was no uncommon thing for the citizens of Mainz to be visited by the banditti of the Lower Meuse, or for the Weser and the Elbe to be thrown into consternation by the roving bands of the Rhine.

An important expedition was rarely undertaken except by the advice and agency of one of the Jewish spies, called *balldovers* in the slang of the freebooters. These persons no sooner became acquainted with the existence and locality of a booty, than they opened negotiations with a robber-chief, and if he came into their terms, which were usually exorbitant, made the necessary disclosures. An enterprise so conducted was sure to end in bloodshed and cruelty; for the Jew, in order to justify the extravagance of his demand, lied and cheated, as Jews have done habitually from the days of Jacob. The robbers, seduced by their avarice, were only too ready to believe their tale to its full extent; and their miserable victims paid in blood and torture the deficiency in their expected hoards. When the pillage was at length effected, the *balldover* usually offered to act also as the *scherfenspieler*, or receiver; and in this character bought the spoils—no doubt, a dead bargain. He thus made a double profit,—robbed the robbers, and spoiled the Egyptians twice.

The assembling of the band for any great enterprise was conducted with the cautious policy which distinguished this remarkable society. The members were generally summoned by a confidential messenger, or perhaps the chief in person, and set out for the rendezvous, sometimes alone, but never in parties exceeding three or four. Each man's mode of travelling was regulated by his usual habits, or by his wealth or grade in society. Some were on horseback, others in carriages, others on foot; and a few had the charge of bringing wagons for the transport of booty. As the way was commonly long, and broken by forests and ravines, some place on the route, of sufficient notoriety to be known to the whole, was appointed, and there the successive groups of travellers began to look anxiously out for the *kochemeresink*, or direction-signs left for their guidance by the leaders. These, placed at the cross-ways, were sometimes merely a line traced upon the road, which each party, passing, intersected with a shorter line; so that the travellers not only knew their route, but the number of friends who had preceded them. Sometimes, when more caution was necessary, a branch of a tree was thrown down, as if accidentally, near the road, with the greater part of the foliage on the side

which it was proper to take. In all their strategetic measures it will be seen that they calculated securely upon the absolute inviolability of their secret; and the examples we have given show on what grounds their confidence was built.

Frequently, the journey was performed in the middle of the night, and a sign of recognition, therefore, was necessary, which did not depend upon the organs of vision. To whistle, the expedient of common thieves, would not only have been vulgar, but dangerous; inasmuch as the sound, when heard in the dark, is sure to call up a thousand cut-throat associations. The *kochemloschen*, therefore, was invented, a shrill and lengthened cry; which the belated wayfarer, although no doubt startled by the sound rising from the brakes and thickets, as he passed, would be more ready to set down as the voice of owls, or evil spirits, than the call of robbers.

When all had, at length, reached the place of rendezvous, an inspection of arms took place, and the *schnelles*, alias, pistols, were loaded. The words were then given which were to signify the advance or retreat; torches were distributed, to be lighted instantaneously, at a particular signal; and the column moved on in profound silence.

The captain marched at the head of his troop, armed, besides his other weapons, with a crow-bar, the baton of his office. After him was carried the *ram*, a classical engine, used for battering down doors and walls. It was usually a beam of timber a dozen feet long; but, when this was not to be come at easily, a finger-post from the road, or a cross from the church-yard, if heavy enough to answer the purpose, was an excellent substitute. Then came the subalterns, bearing the other tools of their trade, which they called *clamones*; and, finally, the private gentlemen of the band, armed, like the rest, to the teeth. The faces of the whole were blackened, or otherwise disguised; partly to prevent the possibility of recognition, but principally to impress the attacked with the idea that the robbers were of the same neighbourhood—although, in reality, they had probably never been within a dozen miles of the place.

Arrived at the bourg, or village, in which, to simplify the affair, we shall suppose that a single house was to be the object of attack, some persons acquainted with the localities were sent to muffle the church-bell and kidnap the watchmen. These “guardians of the night” were very like the King Logs we have now exchanged in London for an infinitely worse nuisance: they slept themselves, and, on awaking, being indignant to find every body else asleep, roused the town by bawling the hour. Having tied up the watchmen in a bundle, and thrown them into a corner, the band marched openly upon the devoted house, surrounding it instantaneously with a cordon militaire.

No summons was given to surrender, no notification made of the coming attack. A tremendous shout declared the presence and purpose of the enemy: their torches, lighted at the same instant, flared suddenly up like meteors in the night; and the ram was applied to the principal entrance in the midst of a

volley of musketry. The firing was kept up without intermission, being now especially directed to the windows in which any light was visible; the astonished inmates, deprived of all presence of mind by the sudden noise and confusion, stood staring at one another in dismay; and the rest of the town, believing that nothing less than a pitched battle was in progress in the streets, barricaded their doors, extinguished their lights, and hid themselves in their cellars.

The door at length yielded to the repeated blows of the ram, and the captain led the way into their land of Jewish promise. If any hesitation was evinced on the part of one of his followers, he turned round, and blew out his brains on the instant—such power being vested in him by the laws of the society. This military execution, however, was rarely necessary. Within grasp of their expected booty, the most timid became brave, and all rushed at once into the house, fighting their way, if the inmates had recovered their senses, and were in sufficient force to resist, till they were in possession of the field. The victims, men, women and children—were then bound hand and foot, and wrapped up in mats or carpets; the building was illuminated from the garret to the cellar; and the search for plunder commenced.

Wo to the miserable wretches, if the promises of the *baldover* were not made good by the amount of booty! No oath, no protestations, could convince the robbers that the deficient treasure existed only in the imagination of the scoundrel Jew. Deaf at once to reason and to mercy, the most horrible tortures, ending sometimes in death itself, were inflicted; and so completely did the passion take possession of their souls, that they looked almost with indifference upon their real gains, in the eagerness of their longings after more.

When the booty was at length collected, packed and ready to be transported, the captain called off his blood-hounds. If any of these were seriously wounded, they were placed on the shoulders of the rest: if an alarm of rescue was heard, they were slain;—on the principle that “dead men tell no tales.” When the rescue actually came, the banditti retired in military order, and sometimes made good their retreat under the fire of regular troops. When unmolested, they fired a *fue-de-joie*, and began their march with fearful shouts and yells, waving their torches in the air; but as soon as they reach the place of rendezvous, the lights were simultaneously extinguished, their cries sunk into silence, and, separating into small groups, they vanished, like evil spirits in the night.

Having thus described, very briefly, the institutions and customs of this remarkable society, we now come to expend a few pages on the different bands of which it was composed, and the more celebrated of the chiefs who led them on to glory and the guillotine.

A man called Moses, a Jew by nation, and whose baptismal name was Jacob, is supposed to have been the patriarch of this illegal but too legitimate race. It was he who gave a form and

plan to the discordant elements of thievery, and invested the heretofore skulking and solitary rogue with the dignity of a bandit. His wife was a worthy helpmate, who taught her sex the arts of penetrating into dungeons, keeping accounts, and managing the correspondence ; and, no less happy in his progeny, his son became a celebrated chief and his two daughters the wives of men who died by the rope and guillotine, and the illustrious mothers of a line of robbers.

The abiding place of this noble family was Windschoot near Groningen, in Holland ; and, from so insignificant a root, arose the tree which was destined to spread its black boughs, and drop its poisonous dews, from the Zuyder Zee to the Danube. Abraham Jacob, the son, more celebrated under the name of *Signet Snyder*, not satisfied with the laurels he reaped in Holland and Belgium, made war upon the law and its lieges even under the gates of Paris ; and of the two daughters, Rebecca and Dinah, one was married to Francis Bosbeck, captain of the Dutch band, who *justified* at the Hague, and the other to Picard, surnamed *Kotzo* a Belgic Jew, and one of the most renowned bandits in Europe.

The band of BRABANT became distinguished at once for the talents and ferocity of two rival leaders, the above named Picard and Bosbeck. The latter especially was an incarnate fiend—and yet he loved and was beloved by the beautiful Rebecca Moses. The damsel, however, was too religious to marry a Nazarene; she made it a sine qua non that he should conform to the ancient law ; and, after many struggles between his devotion to his God and his mistress, Bosbeck became a Jew, and took the name of Jehu. Rebecca now became the fondest, the most devoted, and, for a time, the happiest of wives—but Jehu at length wavered. His sufferings indeed were enough to turn any man's temper sour. His first little accident after he was married, was a captivity of nineteen months, in a subterranean dungeon, so deep and so small that he could hardly breathe. His feet were weighed down by the chains till they were buried in the damp mud ; and the only change of position allowed him, was occasionally when he was taken out to be put to the torture. He was steadfast, nevertheless, in his refusal to confess, and was at length set at liberty ; when, in order to stretch his limbs, and give his lungs play, he immediately ran like a wild animal, capering for joy, and committed a robbery in open day. Taken a second time, he was delivered by the strange, deep, fearful, *feminine* devotion of his wife, who gave her liberty for his. When they met again, his thanks were delivered in stripes and curses. On one occasion the neighbours with difficulty saved her life, and tore her from his fangs, bleeding at the mouth and eyes—yet Rebecca loved on. Jehu, at length, was unfaithful. Then rose the demon in her woman's heart.

“Earth has no rage like love to hatred turned,
And hell no fury like a woman scorned.”

She saw him—she saw him with her own eyes walking arm in arm with her rival ; she ran to the police—betrayed and convicted him, and her once adored husband swung on the gibbet of the Hague.*

The band of MERSEN was once so gentle, so quiet, and so dexterous in their operations, that they were commonly supposed to be the result of sorcery ; but when the devil was fairly laid by the authorities—who are always doing mischief—there arose in his place a human fiend, John Bosbeck, the brother of the above-named Francis, alias Jehu. We could describe, for the delectation of the gentle reader, many atrocities committed by this monster ; but we prefer recording a solitary instance of his generosity—and the rather, as it is connected with a display of heroism, on the part of a Lutheran minister, which is altogether admirable.

The band arrived at the bourg of Mulheim, on the Ruhr, in the jurisdiction of Hesse-Darmstadt ; and, having secured the watchmen, surrounded the devoted house, and lighted the torches, *secundum artem*, they began to thunder at the door with the ram. So little was their visit expected by the inmates, that at the first noise the pastor's wife awoke him, saying that he was wanted by some sick person. Pithahn (the husband's name) put his head out of the window, and was immediately shot at from below ; when he at once snatched up a musket which he kept in the room for his protection, and returned the compliment, wounding two of the assailants. The attack, however, was continued, and, at length, one of the panels of the door driven in ; through which a desperado leaped, and undid the bolts. In another minute the whole band were in the house, and the servants seized, bound hand and foot, and locked up in a stable. Pithahn and his wife were alone.

The courageous pastor was not ignorant of his danger ; but he fought for his life, and for a life dearer than his own. The door at the bottom of the staircase was still entire ; and from a small opening above he kept up a continued fire upon the robbers—till his ammunition was expended to a single shot.

"To the back window," said he—"Fly, dear wife—rouse the neighbours—scream for thy life!" And the woman went, and screamed, and screamed again ; but their craven hearts only trembled the more at the sound, and no one stirred.

The door flew open with a crash, and the bandits rushed up the stairs, howling like hungry wolves. The first door of the bed-room yielded almost at a blow, and the inner bent, and cracked, and groaned under the assault. The wife sank on her knees, and recommended her soul to heaven.

"Tell me what ye want," said Pithahn, approaching the door, "name it, and it shall be yours."

"Thy blood!" was the reply.

"Then it shall not flow alone! Fly, sweet wife, by the door behind the bed. I shall at least be able to gain thee a minute of time ; and I will then follow myself, if it be the will of the Almighty." One moment of irresolution—one cry of anguish

and despair—and the wife vanished at her husband's command. The room-door yielded at the same instant, and the pastor was seen standing in the middle of the floor, with his musket leveled, and his finger on the trigger.

"On—on!" cried the astonished gang, one to the other, but all held back. The next moment the pastor fired, and hurling his musket after the shot, sprang through the little door, and fastened it behind him. He found his wife fainting in the garret; descended with her in his arms by means of a ladder that had providentially been in use that very day; rushed across the back court, and let down his burthen in safety on the outer side of the wall. But, when about to follow himself, he was drawn backwards by a young man, an apprentice-thief, and while disengaging himself from his puny assailant, was felled to the earth by one of the sentinels.

By this time the robbers had discovered his track, and were seen clustering on the roof of the house, and descending the ladder in dozens. The shout of the sentinel brought them quickly to the spot, and in an instant the pastor was surrounded by these hounds of hell, baying with open throat for his blood. "Speak before thou dyest!" cried they; "Where are thy keys—thy plate—thy money? Speak, dog!" And as the pastor gasped for breath, just recovering from the blow which had stunned him, one of them, to hasten his speech, smote him upon the face so violently that the blood gushed in a torrent.

"Is this permitted?" demanded Pithahn, looking with a stern dignity to the bandit-chief—"Has the ruffian acted by *thy* orders?" John Bosbeck, base and brutal as he was, gazed for some moments upon his victim, with undisguised reverence and admiration.

"No!" said he, at length—"Stand out, Hersen; thou hast presumed to act without waiting for the orders of thy chief:" and he struck the subaltern to the earth with his baton. The pastor described the places where his valuables were deposited, and the keys that belonged to them.

"I have now disclosed all," said he; and since death, after the execution I have made among you, is inevitable, show yourselves for once to be men, by making my sufferings as short as possible." The captain gave the word of retreat! A murmur of surprise and indignation escaped from his men. He slung the baton over his shoulder, pulled out two pistols from his belt, and placing his naked dagger between his teeth, looked around upon the crowd with a ferocious glare. The men began to move from the spot, slowly, but in silence, and Bosbeck followed them. They vanished one by one round a corner of the building; but Pithahn could see the face of the last, visible in the torch-light, with the blade glittering between his teeth, turned towards him for many moments before he disappeared in the gloom.

This adventure was attended by another unexpected circumstance, which, however, would hardly be deemed necessary, even in romance, to heighten the effect of the former. The

robbers, laden with booty, were attacked in their retreat by a brother of the pastor, who had succeeded in raising a small number of the inhabitants; and although this would have been a trifling obstacle in itself, yet their scouts at the same moment brought intelligence that a considerable body of Palatine cavalry had crossed the Rhine. To make head against the double force would have been something beyond even the madness of Bosbeck, and he ordered his men to throw down their plunder and disperse.

The band of CREVELDT, or of NEUSS, as it was afterwards called, although almost as strong in number as that of Mersen, was quite different in tactics. Force was no part of their plan when it could possibly be avoided; and, till they were joined by Matthew Weber, surnamed *Fetzer*, the ram was never used at all. A traveller who had lost his way, knocked imploringly at the door at midnight; or a girl, with a sad and silver voice, besought, through the keyhole, some sleepy publican to sell her a little wine for her sick mother. If in either case the door was opened—were it only wide enough to admit a cat—the house was filled in an instant with armed men, the inmates bound and gagged, and the valuables neatly packed up for convenient transport.

No noise being made, there was no danger; and the jolly robbers frequently sat down to a sumptuous supper, and passed the time in conviviality till the dawn. If the neighbours heard the noise of singing and cheering, they only wished, in some discontent, that their friend had thought of inviting them to his company. *Fetzer*, indeed, was so merry a ruffian, that he often made his unwilling hosts themselves laugh in spite of their hearts. He was one of the most daring chiefs withal that ever frightened the Rhine from its propriety; and, as a specimen of his adventures, we give the following brief narrative, translated from a document dictated by himself while in prison, and produced on his trial.

" Michael de Deutz and I were taken at the bourg of Neuss, and lodged in an old wind-mill which was usually appropriated to prisoners of importance like ourselves. This building, on account of its extreme height, and its isolated situation on the ramparts of the town, seemed to render escape altogether hopeless, except by miracle; but, nevertheless, I thought that I must try what I could do.

" After many cogitations, I determined that it was necessary to get to the floor above us: and one evening in November, when the coast was clear, I mounted on the shoulders, and then on the head, of my comrade, and, with the assistance of a bar of iron that I had wrenched out of its bed, I succeeded in making a hole in the ceiling. Through this I crept easily enough, but it took all my strength to hoist up Michael after me, who was much heavier. There was a window in the place where we now found ourselves, but it was strongly barred; and at any rate we saw the sentinel below pacing up and down before it—so that it was still necessary to mount a stage higher.

"A stage higher we accordingly climbed by the same means ; and here we were at the top of the stone part of the tower, having nothing above us but the wooden cupola, with which windmills are usually covered. Here, I say, we were—but how to get down from a height that might make a man giddy but to measure it with the eye, was the question ! It struck me that the old tattered sails of the mill would be useful, if we could only get hold of them, without being observed from below ; and we did indeed succeed in stripping off two. By one of these, if well fastened, I thought we should have a chance of slipping as far as the gallery which runs round the tower at the middle of the stone work ; and by the other in like manner we might descend to the ground.

The attempt was fortunate at first. I joined the two sails together, end to end, and making fast the upper to a bar of the balcony where we stood, and grasping the canvass firmly in my arms, began to descend. The wind blew, however, like the devil, and a fiercer squall coming on at the moment rattled me against the cursed walls, till every bone in my skin cried out. Blinded by the sail, and stupefied with the blows, I knew not where I was, or what I was about. Had I reached the gallery ? Had I already passed it ? I could not tell. My strength failed—my fingers felt as if benumbed—and, at length, I let go my hold, and fell !

"I came to the ground with a shock like that of death ; and, in fact, I scarcely knew whether I was alive or not. The next moment, however, Michael coming lumbering down upon me, recalled my recollection. The sentinel too was alarmed, and shouted to the guard. It was necessary to fly on the instant ; and finding, to my great astonishment, that no bones were broken, we made for the Erp, which was close by, swam the river, and were soon safe in the forest beyond."

Fetzer was executed at Cologne, and would have died, to all appearance, penitent, but for the following brief conversation he held with his confessor, a few moments before the fatal ceremony.

"O that I had my liberty but for two hours !" exclaimed the bandit-chief.

"And what would you do with it, my son ?"

"I would commit the finest robbery that ever was heard of ! But you do not know for what purpose," added he, his eyes glistening, and his voice quivering. "There is a child—a little girl—the only being I love in the world, who will fall into ruin and beggary when I am gone. If I could but leave enough to secure her a good education among the Ursulines of Cologne !"

The band of Neuwied, being formed of the fragments of all the rest, when overpowered and dispersed by the authorities, presents no distinctive features—except a very gallant engagement with the French troops, which we regret our inability, from want of room, to describe. Nearly all the most celebrated leaders figured in this band, and their enterprises were generally conducted on a great scale. It was here, notwithstanding, that the final blow was struck at a power which threatened the de-

struction of political society ; most of the chiefs died fighting, or swung on the gibbet ; and the institution at length returned to its first elements—the solitary highwayman—groups of midnight thieves—gamesters—swindlers—and the obscurer rogues and vagabonds that revenge themselves on the world for its disdain, at the hazard of their ignoble necks.

We have purposely omitted to the last the band of the Rhine, commanded by the renowned Schinderhannes. All the rest, indeed, may be called bands of the Rhine as well as of Belgium or Holland ; but Schinderhannes, except when serving as a volunteer under Picard or other chiefs, never wandered far from the banks of this magnificent river, and may therefore be styled, par excellence, the Robber of the Rhine.

This remarkable person was born at Nastetten, of parents in the lowest grade of society, in the year 1779. A public whipping which he received for some juvenile delinquency determined his course of life. His young heart was filled with shame and bitterness ; and from that moment he sought to ally himself only with those who set at defiance the laws which had degraded him for ever. Having made himself worthy of such fellowship, by committing a daring robbery, and escaping from prison after his apprehension, he sought out Fink, surnamed *Red-head*, who received him with open arms, and introduced him successively to Mosebach, Seibert, Iltis Jacob, and Zughetto, at that time the most celebrated bandits of the district.

The young desperado soon showed that it was his mission to lead, rather than to follow, and in a very little time he became the captain of the band. His capture thus became a matter of consequence ; and he was so closely watched that at length the authorities succeeded in apprehending him in the mill of Weiden. While they were conveying him to Oberstein he contrived to get out upon the roof of a prison where they halted for the night, and attempted to descend by a rope he had manufactured from the straw of his bed. Midway, however, the rope broke, and reaching the ground with more noise than he contemplated, he was retaken. Secured, at length, in the strong prison of Saarbruck, every body believed that the career of the young chief was ended ; when, in three days, the country was thrown into consternation by a circular announcing his escape.

When Schinderhannes rejoined his comrades he found them under the command of Petri, surnamed Peter the Black. This worthy was a tall gaunt man, with a forest of black hair and a thick and matted beard hanging upon his breast. His complexion was sallow, and his voice resembled the croak of a raven, both in sound and augury. When sober, he was plunged in a dull and easy apathy, in which he would do whatever he was bid, to the cutting of a throat or the burning of a church : when drunk he was a compound of the wolf and tiger. In the intermediate state, however, when his mind was fully awake without being over-excited, and when he could murder on principle, rather than from passion, or mere stupid instinct, he was the equal of any bandit-chief unhung. He did not long however, remain a bar to the young robber's ambition. Being taken

and plunged into a subterranean dungeon, where no brandy was to be had, he conceived such a disgust at the French side of the Rhine, that, on effecting his escape, he crossed the river, and did not return for some years.

Schinderhannes, himself, was soon after captured, and lodged in the same dungeon at Simmerm. This was merely a deep vaulted hole, twenty feet under the foundation of a prison-tower on the ramparts, with only a single small opening at the top, through which the captive was let down by means of a rope. The opening of course could not be shut without stifling the prisoner, but, at any rate, there seemed to be no possibility of climbing to it, placed as it was in the middle of the lofty roof, while the chamber into which it led was itself a strong dungeon; tenanted by another malefactor. The young chief, however, was nothing daunted. He twisted a rope of the straw of his bed, threw it to his neighbour above, who made the end fast; and by this means he ascended with ease to the upper chamber. Here he broke through the wall into the kitchen; forced away the defences of one of the windows; and leaped into the ditch of the town, dislocating his foot in the descent. In this state it took him three days and nights to crawl to the house of a friend, lying couched in the forest like a wild beast by day, and resuming his painful journey at night.

Having rejoined his band, he soon made it stronger than ever, by the addition of several important members—among others, of CARL BENZEL, a young man of family and education, whose romantic character and wild adventures we shall take another opportunity of portraying*. At this time he was so well known on the banks of the Rhine, that mothers terrified their children with the name of the young and handsome Schinderhannes. In his own immediate neighbourhood, however, he was beloved by the peasantry, who would have died rather than have betrayed him; and one of the most beautiful girls in Germany ran off from her parents to join his fortunes in the forest, and accompanied him afterwards in some of his most daring expeditions dressed in boys' clothes. Gay, brave, gallant, generous, and humane, there was a high romance about his character which attracted even those which most abhorred his crimes. He was fond of music, and even poetry; and to this day there is a song sung on the banks of the Rhine which he composed to his mistress. He was addicted to pleasure, and a worshipper of women; but the charms of Julia Blasius, the young girl alluded to above, at length concentrated his wandering desires, and converted him from a general lover into an affectionate and devoted husband.

Hitherto, however, he was ignorant of the grandeur and dignity with which the character of the outlaw was invested in Belgium; and when, in homage to his fame, Picard invited him to join an expedition to the banks of the Main, Schinderhannes expected to see only a wandering chief like himself, haunting the deserted mills and ruined castles, roaming on foot from forest to forest, and sweeping the highways when opportunity offered.

* Alluding to "Schinderhannes."

What, then, was his amazement when received by the renowned bandit at the head of a troop of fifty horse, all regularly armed and accoutred, and paid like soldiers besides their share of the booty! Nor were the Belgians less surprised by the appearance of the band of the far-famed Schinderhannes; which they found to consist of a handful of foot-travellers, each armed and dressed at his fancy, and according to his means, and led on by a strippling whose handsome person and engaging manners savoured more of the grove than of the camp.

This was the first time he had come in contact with the other bands, or branches, composing the vast association to which he belonged; and when he returned to his woods, at the end of the campaign, he set himself seriously to the task of introducing order and etiquette into his own system.

Unlike the other bandits, he pursued the Jews with special and unrelenting hostility; and became at length so dreaded by the whole Israelitish race settled in the countries of the Rhine, that they petitioned to be allowed to compound with him by paying a duty resembling the black mail of the Scottish highlands. One of these tributaries, Isaac Herz, an extensive merchant of Sobernheim, was notwithstanding so much alarmed for his life, that he did not dare to stir out of doors without an escort of gendarmes: and this coming to the ears of Schinderhannes, the Jew was summoned to appear before him to answer for the misdemeanor.

At the instant appointed, the cadaverous face of Isaac was seen at the robber's gate, where a sentry armed at all points stood on guard. Being admitted, he ascended the stair, and found on the landing-place another sentry, who, on learning his business, announced his name. In a few minutes the door opened, and the Jew, crouching almost to the ground, tottered into the room more dead than alive. Schinderhannes, surrounded by his officers standing under arms, was seated, with a telescope before him, by the side of his beautiful wife, both magnificently dressed.

"It has been reported to us," said the captain, in a severe tone, "that thou goest abroad under an escort of gendarmes; why is this?" The Jew gasped, but not a syllable would come.

"Dost thou not know," continued Schinderhannes more mildly, "that if I spoke but the word, thou wouldest be shot, wert thou in the midst of a whole troop?" Isaac bent himself to the earth in token of acquiescence, but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. He paid twenty-six francs for the audience, and abandoned his unlawful and useless precautions.

It is no part of our present task to touch upon the more remarkable exploits of this remarkable personage; and we therefore hurry him to the end of his career. Being captured on the German side of the river, under circumstances involving a good deal of romantic mystery, he was conveyed to Frankfurt, and from thence to Mainz, for trial by the French authorities. In this last journey his companions and fellow prisoners were his beautiful and faithful Julia, and the famous robber Fetzer. On the way a wheel broke, and the carriage stopped.

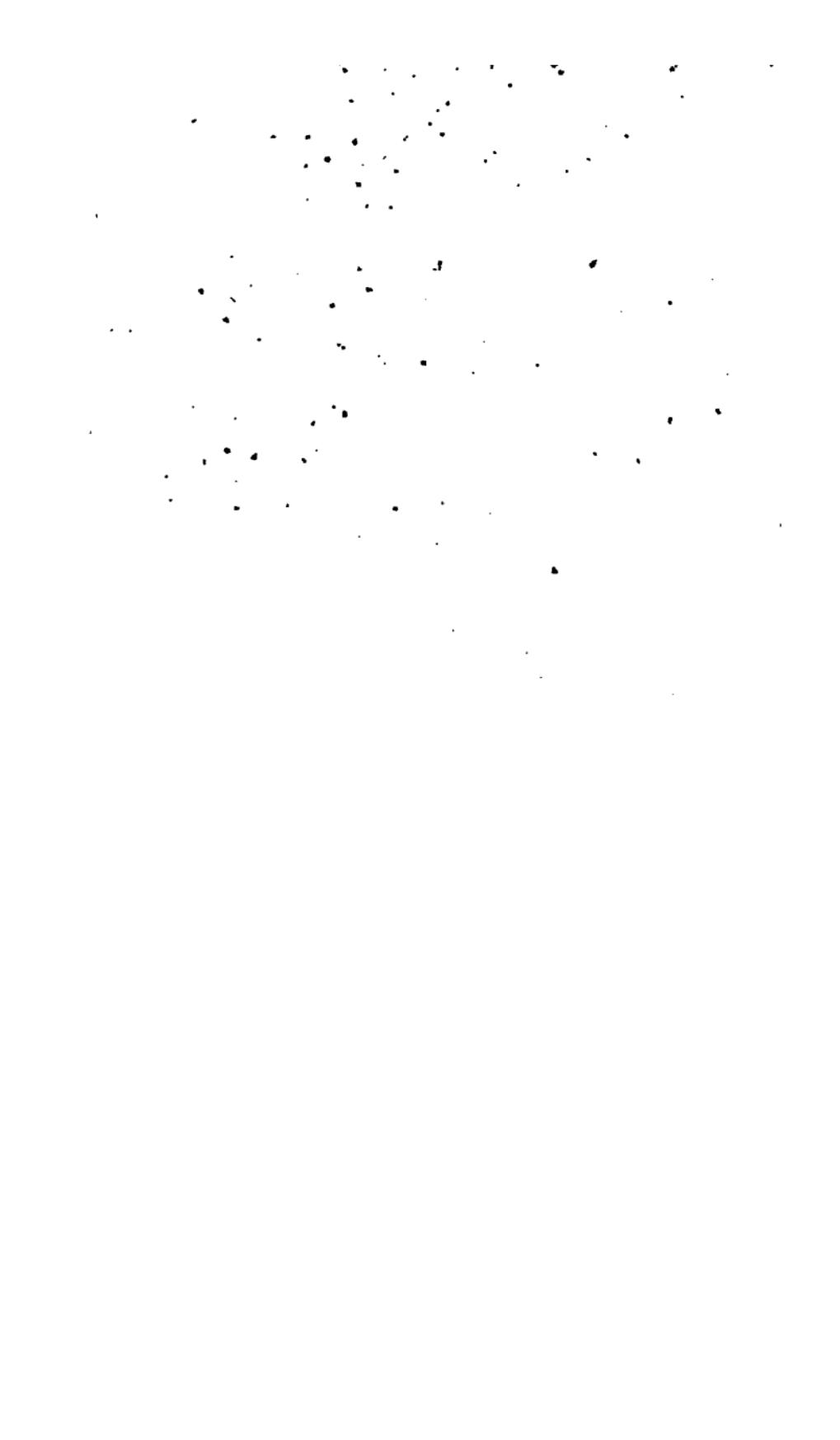
"Comrade," said Fetzer, "that is like the wheel of our life, which is about to stop for ever!" At Mainz they found a great part of the band waiting for trial; and when the important day came, headed as usual by their chief, escorted by numerous brigades of troops, and surrounded by half the population of the country, these desperate men marched slowly through the streets of the ancient electoral palace. On entering the vast and magnificent saloon of the Academy, whose marble walls had heretofore echoed to the strains of music, Schinderhannes stepped lightly to his seat, and looked around upon the thick concourse of the fair, the noble, the learned, and the brave, who had come there for the purpose of gazing upon the redoubted outlaw. He seemed to feel a strange pride in being the hero of the scene. Perhaps his thoughts reverted to his despised childhood—his bitter and degrading stripes—and, even on the brink of destruction, his eye lightened, and the pulses of his life throbbed high, at the contrast.

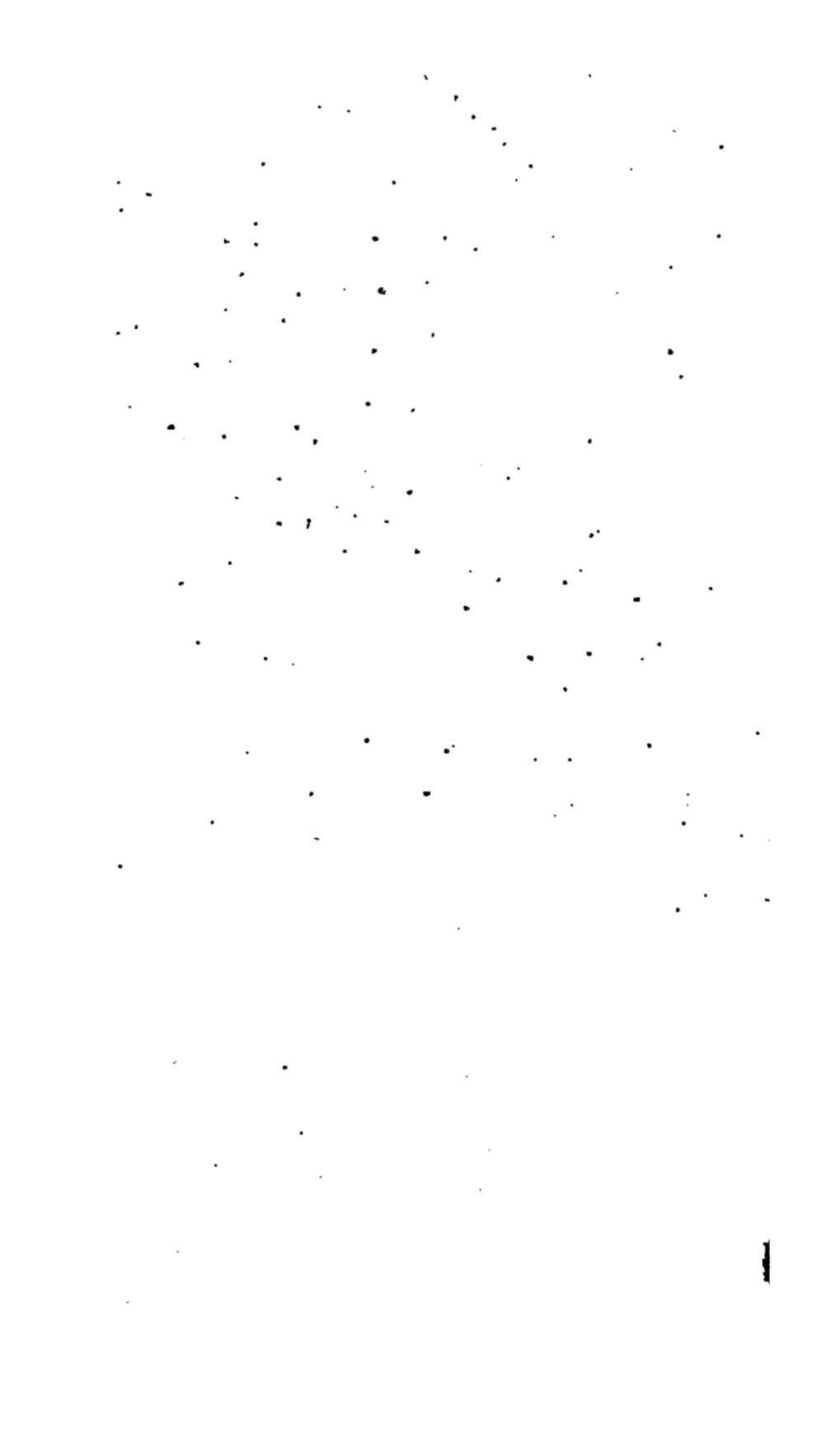
As the trial went on, he was seen frequently to play with his young infant, and to whisper his wife, and press her hands. The evidence against him was overpowering, and the interest of the audience rose to a painful pitch. When the moment of judgment drew near, his fears for Julia shook him like an ague. He frequently cried out, clasping his hands, "She is innocent! The poor young girl is innocent! It was I who seduced her!" Every eye was wet, and nothing was heard, in the profound silence of the moment, but the sobs of women.

Julia, by the humanity of the court, was sentenced first, and Schinderhannes embraced her with tears of joy when he heard that her punishment was limited to two years' confinement. His father received twenty-two years of fetters; and he himself, with nineteen of his band, were doomed to the guillotine.

The execution took place on the 21st of November 1803, when twenty heads were cut off in twenty-six minutes. The bandit-chief preserved his intrepidity to the last, and left to other times, unsullied by many of the basenesses of his tribe, the name of **SCHINDERHANNES, the ROBBER OF THE RHINE.**

THE END.







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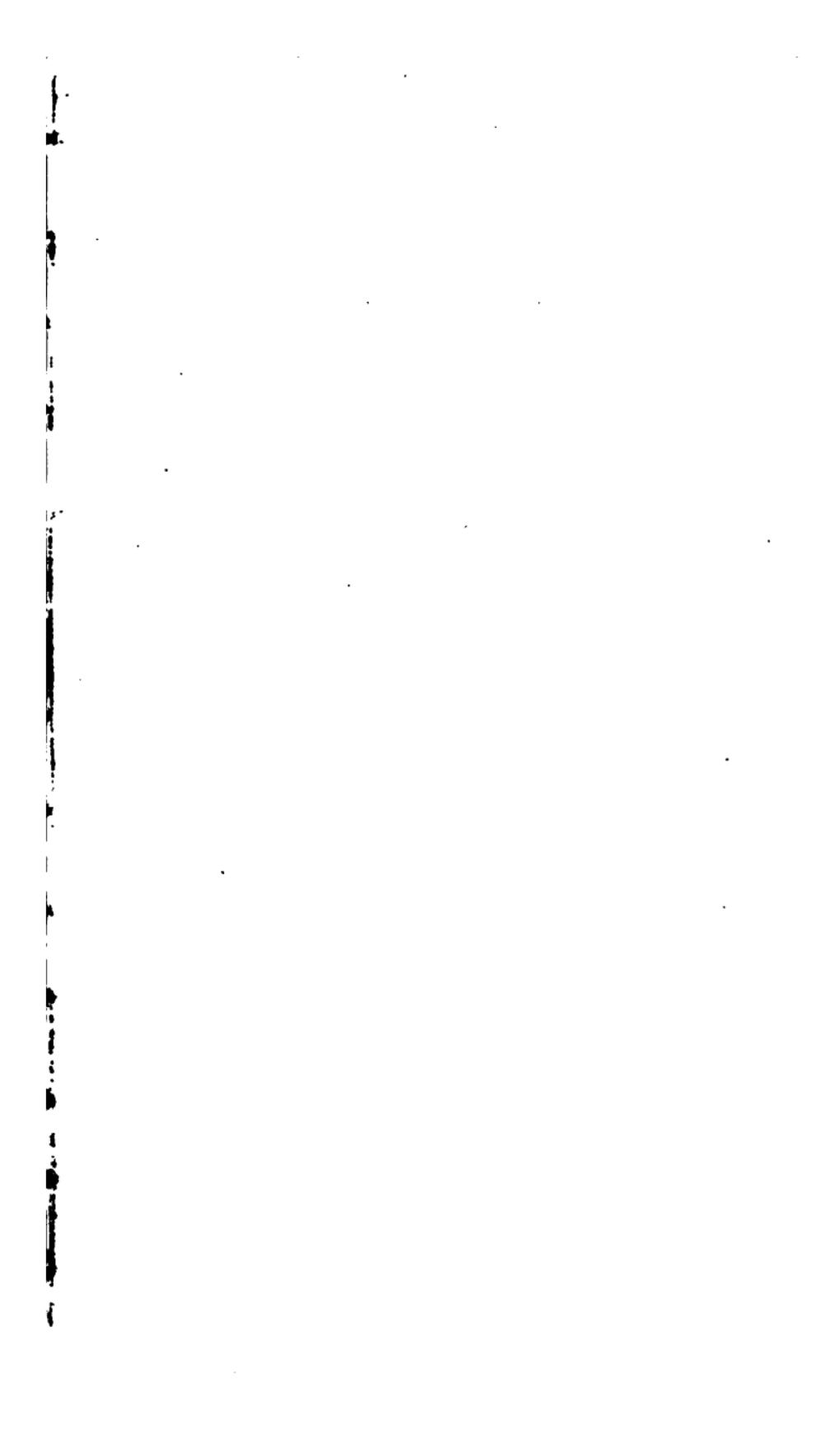
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